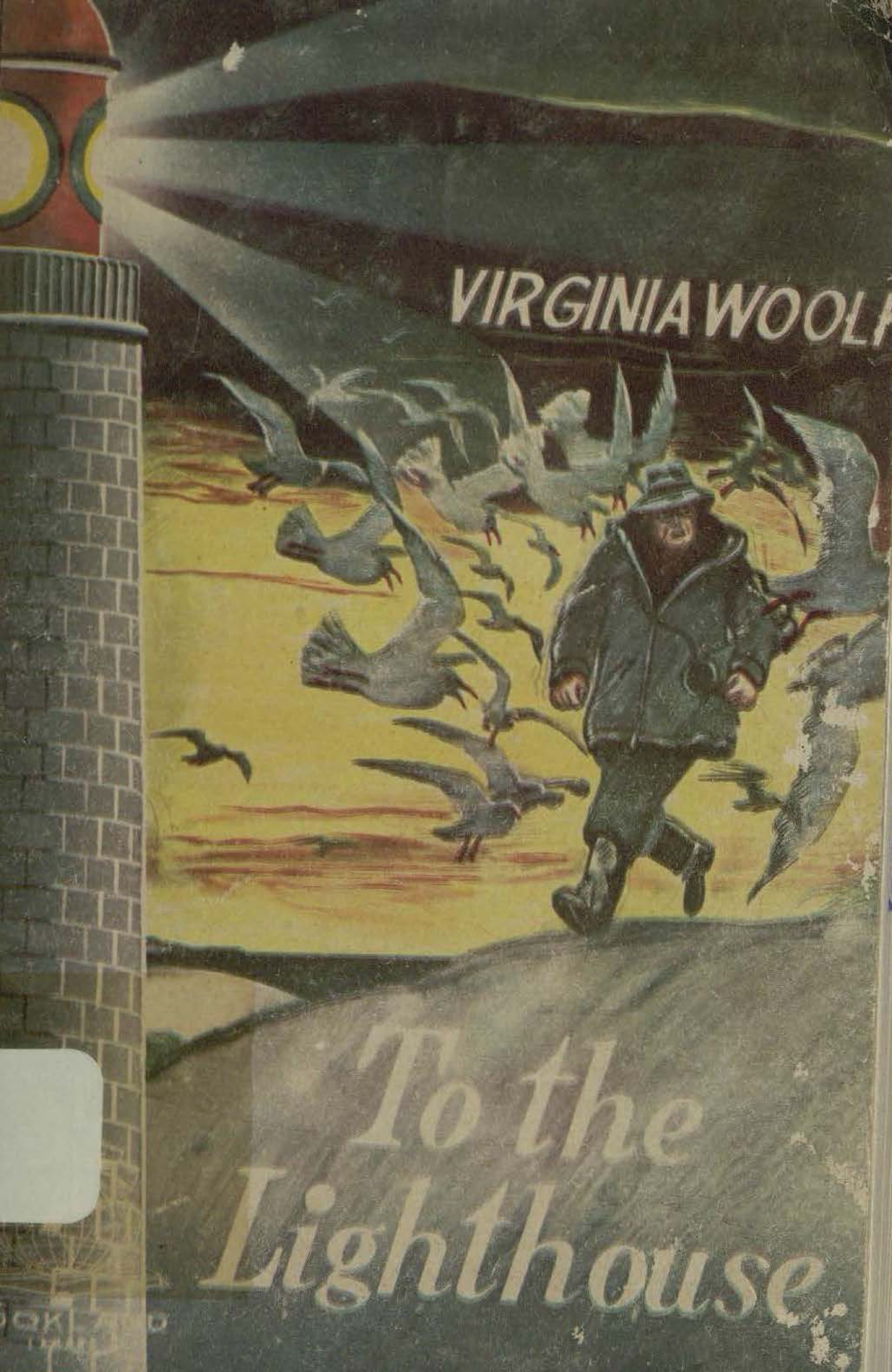

VIRGINIA WOOL
To the Lighthouse.

Students' Companion Series

VIRGINIA WOOLF

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

By

H. NEWMAN, M. A

AUTHOR OF
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PREFACE

The stream-of-consciousness technique marks a new face in the history of fiction, and in England, Virginia Woolf is undoubtedly the most outstanding exponent and practitioner of this way of writing. Modern novel has been passing through a number of experiments and innovations. Among the innovators in modern fiction, Virginia Woolf is in the front row. One of her outstanding innovation is her technique of the stream-of-consciousness. This technique is basically inspired by psychology, and modern psychology has shown that consciousness does not move in a straight line, but exists simultaneously at a number of points—what we do or think now is determined by our past and our ideas of the future. In order to be realistic, the novelist has to catch the flux of life, and for this she uses the stream-of-consciousness technique. The seemingly haphazard prose, the lack of logical connection among various events, the characters hopping from one point of time to another, as though whimsically, the absence of plot and the teasing progress of the story, and the use of the intricate method of monologue interior, are some of the peculiarities of the stream-of-consciousness novel. An attempt has, therefore, been made in this book to treat various aspects of the new technique, its method and its application in, To the Lighthouse, in a way that the students might grasp them without difficulty.

To the Lighthouse is considered to be one of the greatest works of Virginia Woolf, the peak of her achievement. Here, she is at her artistic best.

I must express my gratitude to the publishers, Messers Bookland, for their whole-hearted co-operation and keen interest in bringing out this book.

AUTHOR

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OUR INDISPENSABLE BOOKS

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1

The Life of Virginia Woolf

Social Background

Virginia Woolf was born in London on January 26, 1882. Her father, the famous Leslie Stephen was the editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and had written critical, biographical and philosophical essays. He was the friend of scholars and men of letters. Virginia Woolf was born into what has been called by another of its heirs "the intellectual aristocracy." This was the social and cultural milieu in which she had much of her experience of life, and from which she gathered much of the material for her novels. This milieu was composed of a small number of families, most of them intimately connected. The members of these families constituted the top layers of the middle class, primarily by virtue of their intellectual attainments and moral responsibility, the latter inevitably taking the form of social exclusiveness. Their particular distinctions made them regard themselves superior not only to the philistine bourgeois but also the barbarian aristocracy. Virginia Woolf, in other words, came from the 'cultural elite'—the twentieth century counterpart of the 'Establishment'.

Some of the members of this 'intellectual aristocracy' had formed themselves into a sub-group, called "Bloomsbury". This group functioned after the death of Queen Victoria until the Second World War. Its principal members were Cambridge men who through Virginia's brothers became her friends and also the friends of her sisters (Virginia whose health remained indifferent was educated at home). Notable among the members of their group were Lytton Strachey, famous for his "Eminent Victorians," and the well-known economist J. M. Keynes. This group was greatly influenced by the philosophy of C. E. Moore and exclusive, strictly non-practical pursuit of "sweetness and light" became the ideal of Moore's flowers.

This background gives an idea of the quality and the range of social and intellectual experience available to Virginia. Like her father she used that experience both critically and creatively. Even though she was the centre of the "Bloomsbury Group" she was able to keep herself detached, perhaps because she did not go to Cambridge and also because she did not come under Moore's influence. Not only from this group, even from the social milieu into which she was born, she was able to keep herself aloof.

The Voyage Out and *The Mark on the Wall* contain many caricatures of the dons—distinguished civil servants, aesthetes, politicians and men of letters—in short, the Victorian upper class family and social system came in for sharp criticism at her hands. Against this criticism set the struggle of the free and the enlightened spirit to achieve the freedom and the personal form of life. And this is the driving impulse because it led Virginia Woolf to a more mature interest in her world and its individual members. Instead of hitting off their surface idiosyncrasies she began to see those as signs of the natural human beings within.

Virginia Woolf's Early Childhood

Virginia Stephen came of a distinguished literary family. She was one of the six sisters whose beauty was legendary. The Stephen family lived at Hyde Park Gate in London. Virginia had particular affection for her sister Vanessa and her brother Thoby. Thoby's sudden death at a young age of twenty-five during a holiday in Greece had a profound effect on her work. Her health remained indifferent and so she could not have conventional schooling. Instead she was taught at home by her father, meeting such of his friends as Hardy, Henry James and Meredith and learning among other things Greek with a teacher, of whom she writes in her *Diary* "she was oddly inarticulate. No hand for work."

Her Love for City Life, Sea and Books

After the death of her father in 1904, she lived with her brother and sister in Garden Square, which became the centre of the "Bloomsbury Group". In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf. Mr. Woolf had gone to Ceylon to take up a post in the Civil service in 1904—the date at which the first volume of his autobiography ends. Not long after his return on leave, Virginia announced her engagement to him in a note to Strachey. In 1917, they founded the Hogarth Press that published all her novels. At thirty Virginia had written only book reviews, but some of the deepest interest that were to shape her work are clear in retrospect. She was a Londoner born and bred, and London is seldom absent from her work. Both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years* are London books in ways more than one. The days spent in her childhood in Cornwall left sea memories that haunt her novels, especially *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse*. When she was planning *Mrs. Dalloway*, she noted in her *Diary*, "Often, I have to control my excitement—as if I were pushing through a screen or as if something beat fiercely close to me......It is a general sense of the poetry of existence that overcomes me. Often, it is connected with the sea." Besides the city and the sea, her love were the books. The fascination the books had for her is beautifully described in a posthumously published essay *Reading*. Virginia haunted libraries as she haunted the streets in London before she came to write of the experience in a magical pattern of thought and imagery.

The Effect of the First World War on Virginia Woolf

In 1914, only two years after Virginia's marriage, the First World War broke out, ending an era of security and stability, which people in the West, who grew up before 1914, looked back with nostalgia. Mrs. Woolf held that peace and prosperity gave a family likeness to the nineteenth century writers despite great individual differences. Even as late as 1914, we see the writer sitting as he sat through the nineteenth century, looking at home life. The classes are settled and the writer looks most intently at the class from which he comes. He believes that he looks at the whole of life. Virginia Woolf quotes Desmond Mac Carthy to say that in Cambridge people were not interested in the politics. What they most discussed were those goods which were an end in themselves—the search for truth, the aesthetic emotions and personal relations. "Then suddenly like a charm in a smooth road, the war came." And the war has profound effect on the literature that followed it. Virginia Woolf was no exception. The smug conventional security disappeared, instead the devastation, the lurking sense of insecurity and the broken families that war brings in its train haunt post-war literature. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Septimus Smith powerfully manifests the havoc that war has caused on the mental plane. Virginia Woolf's experience of life was relatively limited, but she made the most of life she did know, by presenting in her rendering of it a clear and positive awareness of other forms of life. She was thus able to view her own world with a poised impersonality and to comprehend its place and value within the whole of which it was a part. Virginia Woolf's background explains some of her limitations, too. She was obviously not a universal genius. It is only that part of life that she knew by experience that comes alive in her imagination. This she implicitly recognises in recording her impressions of working women. Though she observed their experience of life very sympathe ically, she could never know it and feel it as they did. Moreover, there was a lack of profound and spontaneous natural emotion. She attempts in *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* to render such emotional lapses into vaguely gesturing rhetoric. Thereafter with the exception of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* it was around the absence of fulfilled natural vitality that she wrote her novels. Her heroes, Jacob, Flanders and Percival became conspicuous by the absence of that vitality.

Liked Lighter Pleasures of Imagination

It is not far from the truth to say that the only form of life she was fully and effectually committed was that of the imagination. But this commitment was distinguished throughout her life by a disciplined purposiveness which is the anti-thesis of the aesthetic. She delighted in the lighter pleasures of imagination and she had also a tendency towards its more recessive forms, fantasy or lyricism or dissociated idealism. However, in these tendencies she did not frequently indulge in her novels, but objectified and criticised them. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, she examined Clarissa Dalloway with a detach-

ment which shows fully self-awareness. To Mr. Bell, a member of "Bloomsbury Group" Virginia Woolf was the gayest human being he had known. Her talk was scintillating. She indulged in flights and fancy. David Garnett describes her company thus : "Virginia holding a cigarette would lean forward before speaking and clear her throat with a motion like that of a noble bird of prey. Then as she spoke excitement would suddenly come and her voice would cráck and in that cracked high note one felt all her humour and delight in life. She had a warmth and feelings of fellowship which set people at their ease—her voice and glance were filled with affection, mockery, curiosity and comradeship. She saw everyone including herself with detachment and life itself as a vast Shakespearean comedy. She loved telling stories at her own expense. All her personal vanity was forgotten in story telling art."

The Dark Side of Hei Personality

There is, however, the other side of Virginia's personality also —the dark disquieting side. As Christopher Isherwood says she looked like an unhappy, high born lady in a ballad, a fairy tale princess under a spell, with her wonderful forlorn eyes. In her *Diary*, there are ominous references in January and February 1941 to "a battle against depression". But she was determined not to be engulfed in the 'brough of despair'. She made plans for her new books and visited a few places. There was a lull in the war in January. But she was subjected to a certain strain, and this strain, whatever interpretations one might place upon it proved too great for her. On March 28, 1941, she disappeared and opened "that door" and sought death in the river near her home, leaving her hat and walking stick on the bank.

On her death T. S. Eliot said, "Virginia Woolf was the centre not merely of an esoteric group, but of the literary life of London ; with the death of Virginia Woolf, a whole pattern of culture is broken : she may be from one point of view only the symbol of it, but she would not be the symbol if she had not been more than anyone of them in her time, the mainstay of it."

Committed Suicide

Virginia Woolf committed suicide neither because of the depression over her last novel, nor because she dreaded to go through another war, though both of these have been given as reasons for her death. In fact, it is said that in the German blitz she helped give first-aid. Again, not only her last novels but several of her novels caused her nervous collapse because of her extremely self-critical nature. The real reason for her suicide was the return of the mental condition from which she had suffered earlier and from which she thought she would not recover again. To her husband she wrote, "I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel, we cannot go through another of these horrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I hear voices and cannot concentrate on my

work. I have fought against it but cannot fight any longer. I owe all my happiness in life to you. You have been perfectly good. I cannot go on and spoil your life." The balance of her mind was disturbed.

After her death, Leonard Woolf has published *Between the Acts*, several volumes of her essays and sketches, short stories and a book of extracts from her diaries. There still remains a great part of her diaries, which her husband considers to be too private.

Her Father's Towering Personality

Even in her childhood, Virginia's universe was a divided one, fostering two contrary trends in her being. At times, she would settle down in the immediate world where sensations merged freely into fantasy, against this, the presence of her father who was something of a mysterious giant to her, called up around her an unfamiliar country, where gentlemen of rather different stature from those one met everyday—Meredith, James, Hardy. They talked about books and wrote books themselves. She had lost her mother at the age of thirteen. She practised on her parents repeatedly the magic spell of art, without, however, being able to secure the deliverance she obscurely sought. Leslie and Julia Stephen keep on haunting her works. She says that she was obsessed by them both unhealthily, and that her father came to her mind as a contemporary. His personality was towering. If she had lived under its shadow, says Virginia, it would have been impossible to write anything. "His life would have entirely ended mine."

Her Married Life

Virginia's marriage with Leonard did not modify in any appreciable measure her way of life, nor did it alter the course of her inner development. Love, although it occupies a place of prominence in her first two novels, appears there less as a total upheaval or a profound revision of values than as a particular experience in the field of human relations. As an artist Virginia found in Leonard Woolf an ideal companion, who while giving her complete intellectual liberty, knew how to share in her work, not merely with the sympathy and intelligence which she might have got from a good friend, but he gave her that understanding and encouragement which is possible only when the two lives are one. Thus, when Virginia says that she owed all her happiness to her husband, she is only slightly exaggerating things. Their married life was quite happy and still Virginia Woolf found it impossible to continue living in this world.

2

Virginia Woolf and Her Times
Or
Virginia Woolf : The Literary and Social Background of Her Age

The Effect of First World War

In any attempt to assess the prevailing tone of the contemporary world-picture of the Nineteen-Twenties, the world in which and of which Virginia Woolf wrote her best work, it is impossible to overestimate the effects of the First World War. It might have been that even without the War the Nineteen-Twenties would have seen a dissolution of standards—social, ethical, philosophical, aesthetic, religious. The credit of the old world was failing, but there is no reason to believe that, but for the war, it would not have failed in a gentlemanly way. But the war brought the collapse of the whole edifice. It was as if a child had gone to bed overnight with the fond greetings of mother and father in his ears, and had awakened in the morning to find that mother and father no longer existed, that there were at best a couple of elderly strangers in the house. The child had also grown up in the night.

The Lost Generation

The tone of thought of the world of the Nineteen-Twenties was thus an adolescent's tone of thought. The teaching of this age was almost entirely a negative teaching, its inheritance the inheritance of a vacuum. The generation it produced was, therefore, unteachable and irresponsible. The message of the Nineteen-Twenties is again and again, "We are a lost generation, and there is nothing we can do about it." "You are lost generation", Gertrude Stein had said pertinently to the younger survivors of the war ; and in 1925 T. S. Eliot in the *Hollow Men* proclaimed the same thing. The world was indeed a 'Waste Land', its denizens "The Hollow Men".

Those of us who were brought up in Twenties read, in verse, Yeats, Masefield, Kipling, Bridges, the Georgians ; Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy in the novel, Chesterton and Belloc in whatever they chose to write, and admired them ; but we did not feel that they

really had anything to say to us. They were too gentlemanly, too sentimental, too formal, too acceptable.

Political and Social History

The political history of the early twenties is a history of apathy. Women had fought for the sacred rights of suffrage ; at 1919 election barely half of the electorate in the London Boroughs went to the polls. Political liberalism was doomed, simply because there would no longer be enough disinterested voters. The individual self was the only sheet-anchor left in a world otherwise adrift. Society had shown itself unworthy of allegiance, or what was more to the point, unworthy of the individual's taking trouble for it. People were bored with political principles because they did not want to be distracted from their interest in their individual selves ; and for a bored electorate the obviously best government is a conservative government whose motto is "Let sleeping dogs lie."

The Age of Responsibility and Apprehension

If the twenties can be called the age of irresponsibility—they have been called the careless twenties, and, not very aptly, the age of beautiful nonsense—the individual self was clinging desperately to his consciousness. They began in depression, continued in crisis, and ended in war. The poets turned from Freud to Marx, or from despair to the comforts of dogmatic Christianity, and on the whole the change was not good for poetry. The artist went from symbolism to machine. The novelists either died, or turned to biography or history or criticism or silence. Virginia Woolf herself published one novel between 1931 and 1940. It was an age of sociology and so an age of journalism. The individual was struggling to find once again his place in society.

It was above all an age of apprehension and apprehension is a negative force. It was this which was partly responsible for the remarkable sterility of the thirties in creative work of the imagination.

The Emergence of New Genre of Story Writing

The one significant development of fiction in the thirties was the emergence of a new technique in short story-writing. The phenomenon is significant for two reasons : first that the content of the stories is mainly sociological—in essence left-wing propaganda—the tone almost invariably one of unrelieved bitterness and gloom. Secondly, the short story is an art of the miniature. If you want the significant literature of Twenties, you go to T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and Virginia Woolf. In the thirties it may be found to exist in the works of those who contributed at one time or another to E. J. O. Brien's collection of "New Stories" or of those who followed their lead.

Sociological Import

Social and literary critics of the period between the wars never

tire of pointing out that it is a period of 'transition,' a period of breaking up and settling down.

The imaginative literature of the Nineteen-Twenties had no real sociological import because the age was not primarily interested in sociological questions, in other words the study of man mainly as a member of a community. The world of 'Waste Land' and 'Hollow men' was a world of individuals almost by definition, for wherever a community exists there must be at least the shadow of a common purpose and accepted common values. A thoroughly disillusioned society is fundamentally a disintegrated society, a mere aggregate of individualities. This is the picture which we see in Mr. Aldous Huxley's earlier novels, the picture of society without common aspirations. Our great men are either artists or social thinkers, but not both. In the thirties they were social thinkers, in the twenties they were artists, and it was in the twenties that Virginia Woolf wrote not only most of her imaginative work, but incomparably the best.

The Impact of the Age

It follows that this work, to be truly representative of its age, will concentrate upon the "orts, scraps and fragments" of a disintegrated society. It is on this process that her claim to contemporary significance must be based. Moreover to say that she "stood apart from her age" may mean either of two things. It may mean that she kept herself in her writings aloof from the contemporary scene in its more material manifestations—the scene of business, industry and politics—that she had nothing to say for instance about birth-control, the gold-standard, fascism etc. But if this is so, it is relevant to point out that Jane Austen had "no part or parcel with the noisy traffickings" of the world of the Napoleonic wars. The importance of Napoleonic wars to their time and to human history can hardly be called smaller than that of our wars. She wrote of the small scenes of which she had knowledge and in which she was interested. Virginia Woolf did much the same. And although it is true that she wrote of "extraordinary" rather than "ordinary" people, the people were in each case very fair and credible specimens of the people of their times. Only the times were different and different in a radical way. Against a background of settled beliefs Mrs. Dalloway would be an incredible figure : in a world where man had at last got down to the bed of consciousness, she is real enough.

David Daiches made a charge against Virginia Woolf that she was writing about subjects in which no serious reader was in the highest degree of seriousness interested. He says that the themes of time, death, and personality that run through *Mrs. Dalloway* when presented through post-war London society become insignificant and unreal. It would not be easy to say that he who was writing original literature in the Nineteen-Twenties was its true representative. It is true that she wrote alone, but it is hard to see how by any other means she could have come near to the "quick of the mind" of that lonely age.

3

The Works of Virginia Woolf

Introduction

Discerning critics at once recognised unusual promise in Virginia Woolf's first two novels. *The Voyage Out* appeared in 1915, followed by *Night and Day* in 1919. She herself was not satisfied with her work and she began to experiment. She felt that the current tradition in fiction laid undue emphasis on events, clearly defined characters, and material circumstances. Instead she wanted to stress the continuous flow of experience, the indefinableness of character, which changes both in self consciousness and in the impression it makes on other characters, and the external circumstances as they impinge on consciousness. She was also interested in the way time is experienced both as a sequence of disparate moments and as the flow of years and of centuries. *Jacob's Room* was published in 1922. From now onwards she tried to convey the impression of time present and of time past, individual experience and also of the characters' awareness of historic time. In *Jacob's Room* she was only partly successful in embodying her ideas. In *Mrs. Dalloway* which appeared in 1925 and in *To the Lighthouse* two years later, she improved and extended her technical mastery. What is more important, she gave to each of these novels a clear, tightly-organised form. This was achieved partly by using poetic devices such as recurrent images and partly by restricting the time of the action. *To the Lighthouse* was followed by *Orlando* in 1928. *Orlando* is a historical fantasy with brilliant and amazing evocations of England, and especially literary England, from the time of Elizabeth I to 1928. In 1931 Virginia Woolf published *The Waves*. In *The Waves* she returned to fiction and to more strenuous work. In this novel she confined herself, more exclusively than in any other, to recording the stream of consciousness. The reader lives within the minds of one or other of six characters (three men and three women) from their childhood to their old age. They represent six types of consciousness and are clearly differentiated, but it is human experience of the seven ages of man, rather tnan characters or events which is paramount in this novel. This focus of attention is emphasised in the chapters describing a day on the shore from sunrise to sunset, symbolising the life-cycle. In *The Years*, which appeared in 1937, Mrs. Woolf wrote a more expansive novel, combining her own method with elements of traditional narrative. In 1941 came her last novel *Between the Acts*. In this novel, the

action, as in *Mrs. Dalloway* occurs on a single day, but extended time is suggested by the staging of village pageant, recording English history, while the reader is also kept aware of the haunting presence of the menacing moment in history when war was impending.

Virginia Woolf wrote biographies, one fanciful, a fragment on the life of Browning, narrated through the imagined memories of Elizabeth Barrett's dog ; the other is a full length biography of Roger Fry. The first biography came in 1933 and the second in 1940. Throughout her life, Mrs. Woolf wrote criticism of very high quality. Her range was wide and she had the gift of discovering and revealing in brief essays essential characteristics of the writers, she discussed. Her best critical studies are in *The Common Reader*, published in 1926, *The Common Reader*, second series (1932) and *The Death of the Moth* (1942) as also in *Granite and Rainbow* (1958).

The Voyage Out

In *The Voyage Out* the action begins in October 1908 and concludes in the following May. Externally, the structure of the Novel is completely conventional. It is narrated from the omniscient point of view that all the novels have in common. It contains narration, description and predominantly conversation between two or more of characters. Its central story is that of Rachel Vinrace, a young and inexperienced girl whose practical education is taken in hand by Helen Ambrose at Santa Marina, a small town to which they have come aboard a cargo ship from London. Helen Ambrose is the most powerful character in the novel. Rachel is brought into a variety of experiences with a large number of people. She falls in love with Terence Hewet and when she has just begun to emerge into the life of a normal young woman, she becomes ill and dies of a tropical fever.

Night and Day

Night and Day is the longest of Virginia Woolf's novels, and as a comedy of manners, it is the most conventional in form. It traces the behaviour of principal characters against the social standard of upper middle class London. The situation is typical. Katharine Hilbery has for some time been heading towards marriage with William Rodney in accordance with the social standards of her circle. At first, she accepts him, but then reacting against her society she finds another young lady for him to marry, breaks her own engagement with him and herself marries a young man from the lower middle class, Ralph Denham, a clerk, whom after a series of conventionally complicated circumstances, she finds she loves. Against these characters is set Mary Datchet, a worker, whose love for work finally supplants her love for Ralph. The novel, thus, ends with three attitudes towards society, Rodney and Otway accept the society, Mary wishes to reform it while Katharine and Denham reject it. Since the form of the novel is dependent upon precisely those values, the rejection of clash between form and content ; between formal philosophical perspective which makes

Night and Day perhaps the least satisfying of Virginia Woolf's novels. It is clear that the reader is expected to be in league with Katharine and Denham, although their behaviour is irreconciliable with the norms of a novel of manners. More important than that, the form of the novel makes clear those social values against which the hero and the heroine rebel but does nothing to make clear the nature of their higher values which are expressed only most indirectly.

Monday or Tuesday

Monday ov Tuesday is a book of eight short stories, the best of which is *Kew Gardens*. It is a story about life in the Bergsonian sense of the words. Bergson considers life "a spiritual force, a vital impetus equal to pure, as against chronological time and equal to human consciousness attains to awareness, not measurable by any amount of chronological time (or space) when, that is, human consciousness attains to holding eternity in an hour as Blake said life, in this sense is a battle between freedom (eternity) and necessity (spatial time) for the purpose of inserting as much indetermination into matter as possible." There is a constant movement of flux transition, a duration which equals 'reality.' The essence of the movement is one—there is only one 'life itself', one duration. In short, life is a consciousness launched into matter. *Kew Gardens* is an attempt to show the vital impetus in vegetable, insect and human life, fighting with different degrees of success the battle against matter. Another story *An Unwritten Novel* is significant for its being a burlesque of Freud. Of the other stories *Blue and Green* is an undistinguished prose poem, in which green day and blue night suggest action and thought. *A Society* is a humorous story partly successful, of the battle between the sexes, displaying none of the sophistications with which Virginia Woolf was to handle the problem.

To the Lighthouse

To the Lighthouse is divided into three parts; 'The Window', 'Time Passes', and 'The Lighthouse'. The first part is concerned with the events of one evening and night, and the third part with the events of one morning, ten years later. Unity of place is preserved throughout and the setting is at once precise and vague. It is a house at Finlay in Skye Islands, but when Paul Raley thinks of shipping all the way to Edinburgh and replaces a brooch that Minta Doyle has lost, one has a proof of the lack of attention to factual accuracy in Virginia Woolf. And she is quite notorious for this. The action itself may be considered equally un-important. In the first part James Ramsay wishes to go to the lighthouse, but cannot go because of bad weather ; in the third part, he finally makes the journey, but against his will. Parallel to it runs Lily's painting. At first, she cannot formalise her vision upon canvas ; finally, she succeeds in completing the painting but not at all to her satisfaction. The novel reaches its climax in Mrs. Ramsay's death, but this is mentioned in just a sentence : the catastrophe—Mr. Ramsay's

arrival at the lighthouse and Lily's completion of her painting—comes as an exhausted afterthought. No event in the novel can be pinned down. Even Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, which is by far the longest scene in the novel is not self-contained. Not an act or series of acts, but action itself—movement rather than movements—is described by the novel. The characters themselves are for the most part seen in action. Only three things remain fixed : Mrs. Ramsay, the lighthouse and Lily's painting. Even these things must not be labelled "for nothing was simply one thing". The lighthouse for example, is stark and misty. Mrs. Ramsay is, of course, the central character and one of Virginia Woolf's most successful creations. She is projected more as a symbol than as an individual. But, in spite of this intentional indefiniteness, she emerges as a human being of great appeal. Like Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay can create moment of unity that remain intact in the memory, "affecting one almost like a work of art".

To the Lighthouse is really a story of a contrast between two kinds of truth—Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's. For Mr. Ramsay the truth is factual truth, for Mrs. Ramsay truth is the movement towards truth ; since truth is always being made and is never made, the struggle for truth is truth itself. The form of the novel at once expresses and verifies Mrs. Ramsay's truth. By intuition rather than analysis, she arrives at the truth and knows reality.

The second part of the novel, 'Time Passes' which has been universally acclaimed as a masterpiece of description, is actually the testing of Mrs. Ramsay's vision by Mr. Ramsay's facts and the apparent triumph of those facts. Simply, it describes the effect of ten years time upon the little house. Mrs. Ramsay herself dies during these ten years, her son killed in the war, her daughter dies in child-birth. There appears to be no eternity, no permanence but only death and decay. It would seem that Mr. Ramsay was correct, for the fact of this spatialised existence confirms his pessimism. But the truth is just the opposite.

In the third part, Lily begins her painting again, and as she paints, she thinks of Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay rises from death and lives again. Lily, as she paints exchanges the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting. Most critics regard *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf's masterpiece mainly because of the technical ability to display the unity of effects.

Jacob's Room

Jacob's Room, a novel one third as long as *Night and Day*, spans almost a quarter of a century, from about 1891 to about 1915, and its action takes place in England, France, Italy and Greece. It is divided into fourteen sections, the interval between each indicating a change of time or place. Each of these sections is further sub-divided as the omniscient narrator moves from character to another or "interrupts" to say something from her own point of view. This novel has no plot, in the common sense of the term. It tells the story of Jacob Flanders, rather than a story about Jacob Flanders. Jacob is one of the three children, all boys of Betty Flanders. His

father has died two years before the time at which the novel begins. Jacob is taught some Latin by Mr. Floyd, a clergyman friend of his mother. He goes up to Cambridge; he works in a law office in London, reads and thinks a good deal, has numerous love affairs. He spends one of his vacations touring Europe. Shortly after the outbreak of the war he is killed in battle. But with these facts Virginia Woolf is not at all concerned. The reader never sees Jacob at his work. He never sees him in the war. He does not know how or when or where he is killed, for example. The emphases here are almost never where the reader would expect them to be. It is to a group of seemingly trivial incidents in Jacob's life that the reader is directed. The novel, therefore, is not plotless; rather, its plot is its own as an individual novel.

During the second decade of the twentieth century the "life-novel" was extremely popular. "The life-novel is virtually a new form or mode of writing in England since it is a semi-autobiographic account dealing with a person's life from birth to his discovery of the world. Early influences and the pain of youth are stressed. Generally the central character achieves, in some measure, an understanding of life. Certainly *The Voyage Out* has some affinities with the life novel: *Jacob's Room*, despite certain superficial resemblances to that novel—both Rachel and Jacob die just when they should be ready to live, for example—has almost nothing in common with the life-novel. The main difference between the two novels is that Rachel can be understood by the reader, whereas Jacob cannot. Rachel is presented traditionally for what she is; her death, a "vital statistic", is a vital part of the novel. Jacob, on the other hand, is kept distant from the reader, who can never be sure of what he is thinking; death itself is ignored. He is presented dramatically. His speech, his gestures, his silences are recorded, and the narrator— the most important person in the book—tries to guess his thoughts on the basis of these externals.

J. W. Beach suggests that *Jacob's Room*, "feminine" and "evasive," resembles the manner of Dorothy Richardson. Again, *Jacob's Room* is significantly comparable to *Tom Jones*. Both Fielding and Virginia Woolf's narrator—although in different ways—comments upon their heroes and, in doing so, provide philosophical perspective. Tom Jones very rarely thinks for himself, and has very few opinions. He behaves and the motives for his behaviour are revealed by Fielding rather than by himself. But Fielding's reason for this device is Tom Jones himself. Tom is not reflective, does not think. He does not have an interesting mind.

On the other hand, Jacob Flanders is much interested in ideas. What he does is not so important as what he thinks. And he has a most interesting mind.

Orlando

Orlando is a fantasy that moves in time from about 1586 to October 11, 1928. Its action takes place in England and the Near

East. The hero-heroine Orlando grows, during 342 years from an Elizabethan boy of sixteen to a twentieth century woman of thirty six. As a boy Orlando catches the fancy of Queen Elizabeth I and is made her treasurer and steward. But he is exiled from court for failing to marry the Lady Margaret O'Erien O'Dare O'Reilley Tyrconnel (alias Euphrosyne), who had compared unfavourably with the beautiful but faithless Princess Marousha Stanislovska Dagmar Natsha Iliana Romanovitch (alias Sasha). To escape the lust of Archduchess Harriet Griselda of Finster-Aarhorn and Scandop-Boom in the Romanian territory Orlando becomes Ambassador to Turkey, where, he negotiates between Charles II and the Turks. As a reward for his invaluable services, he is given a dukedom. Awaking one morning after a trance of over a week, Orlando finds himself become a woman. Obviously unable to continue as ambassador she joins a gypsy tribe. Soon she comes back to England and settles down at her huge ancestral estate. Orlando's return sets in motion a series of law suits that, in true English fashion, take more than a hundred years to settle. As a result of this she is pronounced indisputably a woman and her three sons by the Spanish dancer Rosina Pepita are declared illegitimate. The Archduchess Harriet—who now reveals himself as really the Archduke Harry—continues to annoy Orlando. Orlando manages to rid herself of him and goes to London—to Blackfriars—for the purpose of finding life and lover. There she has a series of adventures that include joining the fashionable salons, meeting Pope and Addison. With the advent of the Victorian period, Orlando hurriedly changes from eighteenth to nineteenth century clothes and becomes a real woman at last. She marries Marmaduke, who leaves immediately after the ceremony to continue his career of sailing around Cape Horn. Orlando gives birth to her first child and wins a prize for her poem "The Oak Tree". Otherwise—aside from the fact that her house has 365 bedrooms—Orlando is just like any other twentieth century woman.

Of course Orlando has been given innumerable interpretations. It has been called "a study in multiple personality, and a protest against the too narrow lebelling of any body ; a dynamic fantasia on the history of England's spirit ; a learned parable of literary criticism," Ruth Gruber, calling it a satire on criticism, adds that it "seems as much the history of Virginia Woolf's own literary growth as that of Miss Sackville—West or of England. Virginia Woolf appears to trace her poetic development from that of romantic child to a woman asking the realities modulated by her sex.

The Waves

According to some critics, *Orlando* seems not to be a novel in any rigid sense of the word. Also, according to them, *To the Lighthouse* is rather a poem than a novel. Still, it is in connection, not with these, but with *The Waves*, that Virginia Woolf's furthest extension of the form of the novel proper, her own ideas about novel form, can best be examined. ***The Waves*** is in every way an innovation.

In its external pattern *The Waves* seems simple enough. It is written in two types of prose : descriptive and dramatic. The descriptive sequence, printed in italics, is divided into ten brief sections. After each of the first eight of these descriptive sections there is a sequence of soliloquies, and after the ninth there is a single soliloquy which is by far the longest section of the book.

The descriptive parts depict a single day on an English beach (perhaps on the northeast coast) near the nursery school that is the place setting for the first section of soliloquies. The first of these descriptive passages is portrayed from the shore at dawn. But in the later passages, as the sun moves higher, the perspective changes so that at noon the reader looks with the sun upon the whole of Great Britain and parts of France, Spain and Africa, as well upon the sea. The scope gradually decreases again as the sun sets. Furthermore, the time of a year is described that passes concurrently with the time of day—in the morning it is spring ; at noon, summer ; and so on. And the time of day that year in each section coincides with the ages of the speakers in the following sections of soliloquies—at dawn they are children ; in the early morning, adolescents ; and so on. The descriptive part of the book can be read by itself as an artistic whole, but actually its more complex and symbolic significance becomes fully apparent only through the dramatic part. Similarly, the dramatic sections constitute a whole in themselves, but complete understanding of them depends in part upon recognition of their constant references, direct and indirect, to the descriptive sections.

The soliloquies of six persons—Bernard, Susan-Neville, Jinny, Louis, and Rhoda—constitute the dramatic sequences of *The Waves*. These dramatic sections have definite place settings but not always definite time settings. Although the six characters are very different from one another, they can be divided into three compatible duos : Bernard and Susan are alike in their natural fulfilment, though his is a mental and hers a physical fulfilment ; Neville and Jinny are alike in their unnatural fulfilment and romanticism ; and Louis and Rhoda are alike in their refusal to be fulfilled—in their fear of life. It follows that the six persons can also be divided into three pairs of opposites. However great their differences, these characters are the same in one way : all of them are asking questions about the meaning of the life and experience. None of them is content with a day-to-day living regulated by the social standards and patterns.

The Years

Although *The Years* resembles *The Waves* in certain respects, superficial and essential, it is not true that *The Years*, is a repetition of that book. *The Years* deals with materials ignored by *The Waves*. Like *The Waves*, *The Years* follows a number of people from youth to age. There are ten relatively short sections, followed by a long "summing up". Descriptions of the weather begin each section of *The Years*, and such descriptions also begin many of the sub-divisions

within each section. The important function of these descriptions is to produce a union of apparent opposi‹ies within the novel itself. They serve the same function, but not to the same degree, as the descriptive passages of *The Waves*.

Despite these similarities, the differences between the two books are more important. In *The Years* all that was refracted to the reader only through the soliloquies of the characters is directly apprehended. In a very limited sense *The Waves* had social consciousness ; *The Years* is dependent for its effect upon immediate and extensive social consciousness. Moreover, it deals with characters from every English class.

The Years is concerned with good and evil, right and wrong. It can be called a justification, from Virginia Woolf's perspective, of the ways of God to men. The death of Percival in *The Waves* was of course a symbol of evil ; in *The Years*, however, there is no such abstraction. Evil is presented not only dramatically but also immediately ; good, therefore, is also presented actively—not simply as "the Good", but this and that good behaviour in society. *The Years* is a scenic novel, so that the reader remembers people and action rather than individual mood and attitude. This novel achieves symbolic values much more impressive than those in *The Waves*, and is much less dependent upon Bergsonian values for their validity.

4

The Growth of English Novel

Definition

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the novel is "a fictitious prose narrative or tale of considerable length (now usually one long enough to fill one or more volumes) in which characters and actions representative of the real life of past or present times are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity." It is certainly true that the novel, beginning much later than the other main literary kinds, never established a definite formal tradition based on its first recognised models of excellence, as the epic, for example, did with Homer's *Iliad*. But we obviously need a term to describe the mode of writing which has been the most characteristic literary phenomenon since the mid-18th century. Usage has established the term novel. A brief consideration of the problems raised by the various items in the definition above may clarify our understanding of the kind of narrative it denotes.

First the problem of "fictitious". The novel is essentially a fictitious literary form and yet its subjects are often taken from actual events, and its narrative methods typically attempt to create an air of literal truth. The novel arose in a much later civilisation, whose outlook paid great attention to the distinction between fact and fiction.

Just as the content of earlier narrative (epic) is largely historical or legendary, its mode is usually poetic : similarly the novel's pretense at literal authenticity seems to demand prose, the medium of common speech. This requirement in turn leads to another larger historical contrast : mankind's early modes of literary expression were public, and public recitation required the impressiveness and memorability of formally patterned and ornamented speech ; prose literature came later, and the novel is the only major literary form which was not shaped under conditions of public and oral delivery.

The "considerable length" of the novel raises difficult problems. The scale of novels varies widely, from the 2,000,000 or so words to the 250-page norm common to-day. The definition's stipulation that the novel portrays "characters and actions representative of the real life of past or present times" brings us to the heart of the problem. People have been quarrelling about 'reality' ever

since the world began. The characters and actions of Homer's *Odysseus* have just as much reality as those of Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Novel's 'reality' is more mundane and literal one than that of the epic. The actions of the characters in a novel are deeply rooted in common life. The steady attention to the surface of things—houses, goods, appearances, daily life, ordinary conversations—is typical of the novel's technique ; but one must remember that novel's realism of presentation does not ensure realism of assessment ; convincing accuracy of surface description can mask an essential lack of understanding or judgement about the actual conditions and values of life.

The word 'plot' involves a considerably higher level of narrative organisation of events according to a sense of causality. This causal linkage of all the actions and characters is obviously very difficult to achieve in a narrative of novel length ; it requires therefore, the unity in variety denoted by the word complex ; and historically, the novel developed as soon as causal narrative structures with sufficient scale and complexity were created.

Novel and Epic

Because of the priority of the epic among the established forms of narrative and the enormous prestige given it by the genius of Homer, theorists of the novel have been much concerned about the relation of the new form to the epic. Fielding claimed *Joseph Andrews* "a comic epic in prose". Epic belongs to a more primitive stage of civilization, and in the 18th century critics became aware that epic poetry belonged to a particular kind of civilization ; and they eventually saw that this had implications for the emerging form of the novel. The epic and the novel reflect different societies and therefore present different kinds of people. Actually, the items in our opening definition which the novel shares with epic are those of size : both are narratives "of considerable length" and both have "plots of more or less complexity" ; common usage, indeed, has made epic into a mere superlative of scale. As for subject matter, we can only say that the more a novel gives a vast panorama of a whole society, especially engaged in war, the more it approaches epic. But when we consider how the ultimate power in Conrad's *Nostromo* is capitalism, or how the whole trend of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is antiheroic, we see how deeply and essentially different the two forms are.

Novel and Romance

The Greek romances or novels arose long after epic and are associated with the cosmopolitan and commercial cities of the Hellenistic period. Some of the Greek romances related fantastic adventures. The rebirth of literature in medieval Europe exhibited the same sequence : heroic literature was succeeded by romantic. The settled and sophisticated life of the later feudal period, with its development of courtly love, produced the chivalric romance, first in poetry and later in prose. Medieval romance had two new cultural features which were both essentially christian :

the moral idealism of chivalry, and the erotic idealism of courtly or romantic love. Both of these values, of course, were passed on to the modern world, and they provided an important element in its fiction. The medieval romances were so called because they were narrated, not in Latin, but in the romance vernaculars ; and the term has persisted in the French, Italian, German and Russian words for a novel ; only English makes a linguistic distinction between the fanciful 'romance' and the realistic 'novel'.

Realistic Traditions of Fiction

Convincing reference to the details of ordinary life occurs in early literature, but it is usually casual and sporadic. But it was for the richer and more cultivated merchant society of 14th century Florence that the first momentous step toward the modern novel was taken. Giovanni Boccaccio's famous collection of *novelle, the Decameron*, established the basis of the modern short story. The first major resolution of this problem is found in *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615), where Cervantes combined burlesque of the chivalric romances with certain picaresque elements.

The English Novel to 1930

In the 16th century the greatest achievements of English literature were poetry and drama, but there was considerable activity in many kinds of prose fiction. John Lyly's *Euphues* (1578) is a romantic intrigue told in elegant letters, which are interspersed with general discussions on such topics as religion, love and epistolary style. Lyly's main interest is not narrative or psychological but educational, as is suggested by his hero's name (Euphues is Greek for well cultivated), and the very considerable influence of *Euphues* was therefore on literary style rather than on the development of fiction. A similarly rhetorical emphasis marks the most widely admired work of Elizabethan fiction, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590). Sidney tells a very long and complicated story composed of separated noble lovers, disguises, oracles, love philters and hairbreadth escapes, which are set in a conventionalized but beautifully described pastoral landscape.

The same emphasis on complicated adventure is found in many of less aristocratic prose narratives. Chivalric romances both translated and original, were widely read, and so were the shorter and more stylish pastoral romances of such writers as Thomas Lodge, whose *Rosalynde* (1590) gave Shakespeare the plot of *As You Like It.*

Under the Stuarts, prose fiction continued mainly along the established traditions of the picaresque novel, the romance and the *novella*. Apart from another masterpiece in the same genre, Willliam Congreve's graceful *Incognita* (1669), there is little else in 17th century prose fiction of note, with the giant exception of John Bunyan. *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) is in the established Puritan form of the autobiographical confession, which relates the sinner's life until he finds "the miracle of precious Grace ";

the subject of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) is similar, but it is cast in the allegorical form of a journey from the City of Destruction to the Gates of Heaven ; while *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) reveals the ampler opportunities for graphic realism afforded by the exemplary negative case.

Bunyan's prose style shows the force of popular puritan preaching combined with the eloquence of the Authorised Version of the Bible ; it can accommodate the homely and the sublime, and range with equal conviction from domestic trivialities to the vision of burning faith. Bunyan presents his humble protagonists with utterly serious realism ; on the other hand his allegorical method, the narrative equivalent of the traditional Christian way of interpreting realities in other worldly terms, is obviously not typical of the novel, which presents secular life for its own sake.

The 18th Century

In 1688, the year of Bunyan's death, the Glorious Revolution finally destroyed the feudal pretensions of the Stuarts and inaugurated the political and social dominance of middle class commercial interests, of which Daniel Defoe was the foremost spokesman. Though born a puritan like Bunyan, Defoe reflects the strong secularizing tendency of his time ; his pretendedly genuine autobiographical memoirs *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* (1722), *The History of Colonel Jack* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724) are vivid and comprehensive expressions of the social and economic individualism of the Protestant ethic. In form they are loosely episodic biographies of heroes or heroines for whom the quest for middle class security is the most compelling reality. Helped by his journalistic training, Defoe tried to make his fiction literally convincing ; and he also introduced into the tradition of the novel one of its most enduring themes, the struggle of the individual both with the external world and with his own conscience.

Another bourgeois Puritan, Samuel Richardson, has often been credited with the novel's paternity and probably deservedly, if by this is meant that his works are the first which fit completely into the main fictional patterns of the centuries to come. Defoe had no significant successors but Richardson had many, both in England and abroad. His *Pamela*, or, *Virtue Rewarded* (1740) tells in a series of letters how a virtuous, servant-girl finally constrains her amorous master to marry her ; Richardson's exhaustive treatment of his heroine's psychological states had led him to construct a unified novel : and his great extension in psychological depth, continued in *Clarissa*, or *The History of a Young Lady* (1747-48). *Clarissa* is the first, and one of the greatest, of tragic novels. Finally in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54), Richardson used the epistolary method for a less intense kind of the social and moral analysis.

Henry Fielding was provoked by the sanctimonious moralism of *Pamela* into writing *Joseph Andrews* (1742), a lively comic story about the travels, misadventures and final marriage of Pamela's

virtuous brother. *Tom Jones* (1749) is a panoramic novel in which Fielding exhibited his ethical and social views in a large and complex plot; while *Amelia* (1751) is a more sombre treatment of the consequences of marital infidelity and weakness. Fielding is in many ways the anti-thesis of Richardson: equally serious as a moral and social thinker, his method was essentially humorous, expansive, eclectic and illustrative.

The chief immediate successors of Richardson and Fielding were Tobias Smollett and Laurence Sterne. Smollett in *Roderick Random* (1748), *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and other novels, of which the best is *Humphry Clinker* (1771), developed the primarily comic and satiric novel along picaresque lines: he is most successful, perhaps, in the presentation of eccentrics and grotesques. Sterne, perhaps the most gifted and certainly the most original of the 18th century novelists, wrote *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), a witty, indecent and brilliantly prolonged demonstration of how to entertain the reader without ever giving him the novelistic development he expects.

In the later part of the 18th century the reading public expanded and the number of the novels produced increased. Few of them, however, were of much importance apart from Oliver Goldsmith's popular and influential *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). The sentimental novels of Henry Mackenzie and the Gothic tales of Horace, Walpole, William Beckford, Ann Radcliffe and Lewis revealed the growing taste of writers and readers alike for strong appeals to the emotions.

The Romantic Period

English romanticism found its main expression in poetry, but Sir Walter Scott's romantic interest in the past brought about the historical novel which soon became extremely popular all over the Europe. Some of his important novels are, *Waverley* (1814), *Old Morality* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1818) and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818).

Jane Austen described her own time and scenes. *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815) and *Persuasion* (1818) are beautifully poised studies of "three or four families in a country village." She initiated one of the greatest and most characteristic traditions of the English novel, that of familiar domestic comedy used to present larger conflicts of moral and social values.

The Victorians

During the reign of Queen Victoria the novel became unquestionably the dominant literary genre. The Victorian novel was typically very long; many were published in three volumes. Charles Dickens was a reformer in everything he wrote, attacking a multitude of social, political, administrative and economic evils. There are many things in his novels which modern criticism finds it difficult to

defend : the melodramatic over-simplification of goodness and badness in *Nicholas Nickleby*, the sentimentalism of the *Old Curiosity Shop*, the insular and unhistorical bias of *A Tale of Two Cities* and the rambling and overcomplicated plots. Yet the intensity and the variety of Dickens' imagination and his unique rhetorical gifts make light of these defects : *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* give what only the greatest literature can give, a comprehensive, personal and enduring vision of the world.

If Dickens is the greatest novelist of the age, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) is probably its greatest novel. Her great gifts of heart and head united with her supreme insight into individual moral development and produced a vast panorama of a Midland community. William Makepeace Thackeray was Dickens' chief rival, although his more polished but less intensely committed novels, have not worn so well. His *Vanity Fair* remains a great and permanent achievement. Of the four novels of Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (1847) maintains its peculiarly powerful spell despite its melodramatic sentimentality ; while her sister, Emily Bronte achieved in *Wuthering Heights* an intensely tragic confrontation of the passions of love, jealousy and hatred. At a somewhat lower literary level are many other Victorian novelists of real interests and importance.

Later in the century, George Meredith's great reputation was based on wit, intelligence and a marked poetic gift ; but although *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist* and *Daina of the Crossways* reveal considerable psychological acuteness and a brilliantly ironic command of the social scene, they now seem to have almost disabling affectation of manner.

The other great novelist of the later part of the century is Thomas Hardy, also a poet and a master of landscape. His tragic novels *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, give a harrowingly veracious picture of the consequences of sexual frustration and social deprivation.

The Edwardian Period

The influence of the French and later on of the Russian novelists began to be felt in England toward the end of the 19th century. Few of the English novelists were much concerned with the problem of technique, however, and their originality came mainly from their content. This description is on the whole true of the most successful novelists of the Edwardian period—H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennet and John Galsworthy—although Bennet was at first a conscious adherent of the tradition of French Realism. In *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908) and *Clayhanger* (1910), he showed his great capacities as a shrewd observer of social and economic life. H. G. Wells wrote novels of many kinds ; but his principal aim, in *Tono-Bungay* for example, was to use fiction as a sounding board for his own radical views of social, political and sexual reform. John Galsworthy began his

classic exposure of the Victorian upper middle class in *The Man of Property* which developed into *The Forsyte Saga*. Joseph Conrad, their contemporary, combined the old and the new in his personal art. His plots employed the resources of the adventure story and of melodrama and his essential moral themes were fairly traditional ; but in *Lord Jim* he follows the impressionistic technique. E. M. Forster, another transitional figure, wrote all his novels except *A Passage to India* before 1914. He used the comedy of domestic manners as his form. Forster's novels explored the possibilities of harmony between countries, classes and persons through intelligence, sensitivity and love.

After World War I

The two revolutionary voices among the novelists of this period were those of James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. They had little in common except the absolute individualism of their lives and art, which led them both to frank explorations of private experience, including the animal functions. D. H. Lawrence began with realistic and fairly traditional novels about the mining towns and countrysides such as *Sons and Lovers* (1913) which recorded the conscious and unconscious results of the hero's emotional attachment to his mother. Later on, he became bold to express in his novels the instinctive, inarticulate elements in character and personal relationships ; *Women in Love, The Rainbow* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are works of great power, insight and truth.

James Joyce began in the aesthetic tradition, with its cult of the lonely, Godlike creater. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a brilliantly composed picture of its hero's emergence from the restrictions of family, religion and country into the freedom of the artist. What gives *Ulysses* its greatest power is the use of in rior monologue to reveal the inmost minds and feelings of the characters as they live, hour by hour through a Dublin day. Joyce's last work, *Finnegans Wake* attempts throu new language and a new mythic mode of narrative to cover the whole of the recurring cycles of world history in the form of a dream by Dublin public-house keeper.

Virginia Woolf was almost as famous an innovator as Lawrence and Joyce. She developed the consistent stream-of-consciousness method in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, which revealed a genius far poetic description of mood and atmosphere. Among the other English writers of the 1920s, Aldous Huxley was perhaps the most famous for his intellectual witty and cynical novels of discussion.

Time perhaps will decide that Ford Madox Ford and Wyndham Lewis were underrated in their day. Wydham Lewis in *Tarr* (1918), *The Apes of God* (1930) and other fictions remained an uncompromising and powerful critic of the life and literature of his times. After 1920 have emerged many young novelists who have yet to establish their reputation.

5

Modern Fiction : Its Chief Features

Materialism

In making any survey of modern fiction, it is difficult not to take it for granted that the modern practice of the art is somehow an improvement upon the old. With their simple tools and primitive materials, it might be said, Fielding did well and Jane Austen even better, but compare their opportunities with ours ! Their masterpieces certainly have a strange air of simplicity. It is for the historian of literature to decide if we are now beginning or ending, or standing in the middle of a great period of prose fiction. Our quarrel, then is not with the classics. And that we speak of quarrelling with Wells, Bennet and Galsworthy is because of the fact of their existence in flesh and blood that their work has a living, breathing and everyday imperfections which bids us take what liberties with it we choose. But it is also true that, while we thank them for a thousand gifts, we reserve our unconditional gratitude for Hardy and for Conrad. Wells, Bennet, and Galsworthy have excited so many hopes, and disappointed them so persistently, that our gratitude largely takes the form of thanking them for having shown us what they might have done but have not done. No single phrase will sum up the charge or grievance which we have to bring against mass of work so large in its volume and embodying so many qualities. If we tried to formulate our meaning in one word we should say that these three writers are materialists. It is because they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body. Their characters live abundantly but it remains to ask how they live, and what they live for.

If we fasten, then, one label on all these books, which is one word materialists, then we mean by it that they write of unimportant things ; that they spend immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring.

Historical Influences

The modern English novel, though still distinct in many ways, has been affected by many of the same historical and social influences, while its literary development has been influenced by the fiction of many other countries, notably of France.

In England, the exploitation of a vastly enlarged reading public by the mass mediums greatly increased the separation between "highbrow" and "lowbrow". This separation, combined with the increasing political and social dominance of a vulgarly philistine class of financiers and industrialists, widened the gap between writers and society. No writer since Dickens has been both the best and the most popular ; the greatest modern novelists bear on both sides of the Atlantic the same stigmata of alienation and dissent : Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence were alike exiles and expatriates.

Realism and Naturalism

The increasing separation of the modern novelist from the values and attitudes of his society is reflected not only in the subjects but also in the structures of his fiction and its modes of representing reality. Scott had given the novelist the dignity of the historian ; Stendhal aspired to be the chronicler of his century ; Balzac set out to be the scientific naturalist of the human species ; but it was not until Gustave Flaubert's ***Madame Bovary*** in 1857 that the novel was given a pattern of conscious technical expertness. The name of realism was soon given to the school of Flaubert ; it rejected any idealization of 'reality to romantic wishes of the reader or the writer ; instead, the novelist was to be a wholly objective recorder of 'reality'.

With naturalism the process went further. Emile Zola codified the analogy of the novelist and scientist : neither of them selects or creates ; they merely study and report. They studied large segments of experience that had hitherto been ignored. They scorned their reader's desire for edification and entertainment, and outraged their fine feelings. In general they worked in the spirit of science, with its ideal of thorough dispassionate enquiry. And that there was a new kind of realism was heralded by the invention of a new label : naturalism.

Impressionism and the Stream of Consciousness

Impressionism follows from Flaubert's concern with objective methods of narration, but its quasi-scientific and epistemological bias also relates it to Realism and Naturalism. The doctrine was clearest in the Impressionist painters, who theorized that the "real" pictorial reality was not the object as it was known to be, but the object as it appeared to the observer under special conditions of atmosphere.

"Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged," declares Virginia Woolf; "life is a luminous halo." Her whole effort is accordingly to render the "myriad impressions" that we daily receive, the "semi-transparent envelop" veiling all our activities. She is, in short, an impressionist ; and as such, she joins the large company, including Conrad, Proust, and Lawrence, who have extended into literature the method of the French painters : a projection of the artist's immediate sense-impression as opposed to a literal reproduction of surfaces or an intellectual analysis of what

underlies them. Yet even when they deliberately distort appearances for the sake of essences, the aim of these writers remains fundamentally realistic. They have simply developed finer instruments than the earlier realists and penetrated further below the surface of the familiar. They are simply striving to convey in purer form the impression life makes upon us.

But beyond these experimenters is a more advanced group whom in *The Twentieth Century Novel* Professor Beach aptly describes as "expressionists". In certain chapters of *Ulysses*, James Joyce definitely departs from the world of appearance employs the principles of abstract composition. And Joyce is but one of a number who, eager to distil the very quintessence of actuality, are led to the use of extra-realistic devices and enter the realm of the unreal.

The type of narrative to which the term, "stream-of-consciousness" applies, has its origin in English in the novels of Dorothy Richardson and Joyce. In the followers of Joyce and Miss Richardson, it is probably Virginia Woolf who makes the most frequent use of the stream-of-consciousness method, especially in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. The stream-of-consciousness type of narrative is a new and radical development from the subjectivism. Its definite feature is the exploitation of the element of incoherence in our conscious process. This incoherence characterizes both our normal and our abnormal states of mind. Our psyche is such an imperfectly integrated bundle of memories, sensations and impulses, that unless sternly controlled by some dominating motive it is likely to be at the mercy of every random gust of suggestion. In our day, an extraordinary amount of interest has been shown in what we may call passive states of mind. This stream-of-consciousness floods the novels of James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and Conrad Aiken, and trickles through the novels of innumerable others.

THE SUMMING UP

The new writers have felt the need to break up conventional patterns. They have wanted new technical devices, new procedures for rendering the psyche.

Instead of regularity of form, they show a tendency to what at first blush appears a freakish changefulness and unpredictability. Analysis will show that form with them is not so freakish as it seems; only their principles of form are not those which have been traditional for the novel. They are not determined by the plot as with Fielding or Trollope. So they have a tendency to *deformalization*.

Instead of uniformity and simplicity, they tend to diversity and complexity. In this respect, they show a superficial resemblance to the earlier Victorian novelists, with their abundance and colourful variety of material. And yet the spirit and technique and dominant

preoccupations of the new men are so different from those of the Victorians that no one would dream of comparing the two schools.

Instead of concentration around a limited issue, they show an eccentric tendency, a tendency to fly off in many different directions.

Instead of continuity of action, they show a tendency to discontinuity. A continuous action seems to them too unlike ordinary experience, with its freakish, accidental interruptions, its overlappings of time and circumstance. They feel that the sense of life is often best rendered by an abrupt passing from one series of events, one group of characters, one centre of consciousness, to another.

Moreover, they do not particularly care about neatly finishing off a given action, following it through to the fall of the curtain. They know the imagination has the faculty of filling up the gaps in an action presented in fragments, of getting the impression of an entire life from a mere hinting indication of the high moments. Again, they feel that the imagination is stimulated and rendered more active, is actually exhilarated, by broken bits of information, as the nerves are stimulated by the discontinuity of an electric current.

Want of continuity, yes—but not of a sort or rhythm, a sense of movement, of wave-like progress. This rhythm is not metrical like that of verse, but is constituted by repetition, by recurrence of themes, by a kind of lyrical agitation of the stream of consciousness.

Instead of dramatic effect, these men go in for something more like lyricism.

They show a tendency to throw overboard terms intellectual logical, sentimental. They rely more on impressions of the sense—on a mere succession of sensations—for rendering the psyche. And then this method conforms to the actual thought-process, which is chiefly made up of items of sensation, rather than being a connected chain of logical reasoning.

The new writers do not represent a sharp and complete break with tradition. In particular, some of them have learned a great deal from the earlier novel. But it will be seen how much they were in reaction against most of its main tendencies. And, in general, their motive has been to give new life to a form which, in the hands of the writers of that school, had become so impoverished and anaemic.

6

The Stream of Consciousness and the Novel

Historical Background

By 1905 all but the two major Victorian novelists were dead, and these two—George Meredith and Thomas Hardy—were writing not novels but poetry. In 1910—the year when Georgians took over from the Edwardians in England—Virginia Woolf significantly remarked that "human character changed". The Edwardians saw people as simple, whole definable ; the Georgians saw them as complex, diverse, ineffable—several non-literary events were responsible for this change in perspective. Freud's writings began to appear in English translations shortly after 1910. Also, in the same year the Post Impressionist exhibition had shown a new way of looking at people and life. The Ideas of Bergson and William James had started receiving attention in England. Added to all these was the literary event, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated—the impact of Dostoevsky. Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy had been translated in English in 1880s. But not until after 1910 were the Russians admired and hated violently in England.

The Edwardians were too matter-of-fact. The innovations of Henry James and Conrad had made their limitations clear. With his insight and technical ability James made all too evident the slick emptiness of H. G. Wells and Galsworthy. It became clear to the Georgians that if they were to explore new territories, they required new tools. The new perspective needed a new technique. The Georgians tried to probe beneath the surface of society and human character, down to where they felt the truth was hidden. In the Georgian novel there is expressed a wish to strip the dead outer covering to cast off what is mere appearance and to find underneath the reality that has been hidden by a superimposed husk. And it is this desire to probe the inside of man and to find out a technique for that probe that explains the birth of psychological novel or the ***stream-of-consciousness*** novel. Miss Dorothy M. Richardson had begun to write what would in the end be a twelve-part novel entitled *Pilgrimage*. The most important protagonist of the new novel was, of course, Virginia Woolf.

The Birth of the Psychological Novel

The new phenomenon was, however, not confined, to England. On the eve of the First World War, three novelists unknown to each other were writing works destined to have considerable influence on the fiction of this century. In France, Marcel Proust, a sickly man and a semi-recluse, deeply introspective and self-absorbed published in 1913 the first two volumes of *Remembrance of Things Past*. An Irishman, James Joyce began publishing in serial form in 1914 *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The third novelist was, of course, Miss Dorothy. Thus between 1913 and 1915 was born the new novel, known also as the "novel of the silent" and the "internal monologue," besides its popular names—the psychological novel and the novel of the *stream-of-consciousness*. The three novelists turned fiction from the external to internal reality, from the outer world that Balzac had charted a century before to the hidden world of fantasy and reverie into which there play constantly the life and perception of our senses. The works of these writers possessed striking similarities : they seemed to be essentially autobiographical, they contained unusual infusion of the language of poetry and a curious kinship of search, voyage, pilgrimage. Indeed, all were voyages through consciousness. The three writers were aware in extraordinary degree of their feelings and sensations. They were capable of candid self examination. All the three wrote from an acute need to pose inner problems and project their inner life before the world.

Proust's continual illness had confined him to the four walls of his room. As in psycho-analysis the patient is isolated from external stimuli so that his mind may play over his past and link it with the present, so Proust in his sound-proofed room could practise the extraordinary self-analysis. The present assailed him too violently. The immediate experience erupted into allergies and the ills of the flesh. In the past, there was tranquillity. By the process of remembering, he found himself. Joyce, nearly blind from childhood, lived in the world of sound. Unlike Proust, however, he wanted to catch the present, the immediate moment of perception. Certain quiet intensities of Dorothy's inner being clamoured to be set down and her novel become a vehicle to bring them out.

The *stream-of-consciousness* novelist sought to confront the reader with the direct mental experience of the characters. As a distinct departure from the conventional novels, unrolling themselves in majestic leisure with the author constantly telling the story omniscient to the extent of knowing everything about the characters, the writer of the new novel (except Proust) seemed bent on effacing himself. The removal of the writer from the scene necessitated a significant shift in narrative ; it created the need to use the memory of the characters in place of the reader's in a relationship with their past.

There was no story, no plot. In addition, this kind of novel seemed to turn the reader into an author. Ultimately it was he who put the story together—he had to accumulate all the data. It was

for achieving a full measure of realism that the novelist left the characters alone to put forth their mind. It was an attempt to document the whole world of the sense in a minute and to catch fugitive thoughts in their progress through the mind—catch them as Joyce did in *Ulysses*—in their moment or flux. For the first time these writers were trying to find words that would convey elusive and evanescent thought. They were seeking to express, moreover, the images of the inner world of fantasy, fusing with sounds and smell, the world of perceptual experience. This attempt is significantly different from, what for instance Dostoevsky did or from what Shakespeare's soliloquies import. In the former, there is more of a narrator's report than the flowing of *stream-of-consciousness*. And Shakespeare's soliloquies are organised monologues in which the mind presents reasoned and ordered thought. Even in the mad speeches of Lear, there is "reason in madness".

Origin of the term Stream of Consciousness

It was William James, the well-known psychologist, who coined the phrase *stream-of-consciousness*. He used this metaphor to describe the flux of the mind, its continuity and yet its continuous change. According to William James, "Consciousness is an amalgam of all that we have experienced and continue to experience. Every thought is a part of the personal consciousness : every thought is also unique and ever-changing. We seem to be selective in our thoughts, selectively attentive or inattentive, focussing attention on certain objects and areas of experience, rejecting others, totally blocking others out." Experience is remoulding us every moment and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world upto the moment. This is true not only of ideas but also of sensory perception as consciousness registers them.

Influences on the Psychological Novel

The psychological novel, in a way, dates back to Samuel Richardson. His epistolary method that brought the reader close to the thoughts and feelings of the characters had given way to the self-conscious modern psychological novel in which the thought and feelings themselves were recreated. The modern psychological novel is "modern" in that it reflects the deeper and more searching inwardness of our century. This turning inward was prompted by the writings of Bergson and Freud apart from William James. Their exploration of the psychology of thought-consciousness went far beyond the mere analysis, courageously attempted by Hume, Locke and others. Proust studied under Bergson. Bergson's concept of time as the measure of existence, the "invisible progress of the past in the evolution of the creative act, his discussions of intuition and reality, his belief in the flux of experience"—all these ideas are taken up and studied with extraordinary refinement. Bergson held that we are remoulded constantly by experience, that consciousness is a process of endless accretions, as long as mind and sense are

functioning ; that it is "the continuation of an infinite past in the living present." Hence, there is in the psychological novel a pre-occupation with time. By the watch, hours pass with continuous regularity. The novelist makes an hour seem like a week or a week like an hour. In the mind past and present merge. We suddenly call up a memory from distant childhood and in the mind it becomes suddenly vivid and is relieved for the time being. So when the novelist is setting down the thoughts of the characters as they are passing through their minds, he is only recording the present moment and no other. Thus Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce in *Ulysses* sought to record a single day. Throughout in Virginia Woolf, there is preoccupation with the moment.

Bergson had described the flux of life ; the psychological novel sought to frame it in words. According to the new writers, the evanescence of experience could be evoked in literature only through the use of images and symbols. Sometimes, author has to use his very personal symbols. It required that verbal beauty of the mind to express the mind. The roots of Proust's novel reach deeply in the symbolic movement.

Internal Monologue

The recording of inner experience is a difficult task, indeed. Equally difficult has been to find an adequate term to describe the literary process. Ultimately the phrase 'internal monologue' acquired currency. The internal monologue, like any other monologue, is the speech of a given character, designed to introduce us directly into the internal life of the character, without the author's intervention to explain or to comment ; also like every monologue, it is a discourse without the author's intervention to explain or to comment ; also like every monologue it is a discourse without the listener. The internal monologue is however different from the traditional monologue in some ways. Taking first the substance, it expresses the most intimate thoughts, those closest to the unconscious. As regards its spirit, it avoids all logical organization of thoughts and expresses them in their original state as they come to the mind. As regards its form it is expressed by means of direct sentence, reduced to a syntatic minimum. The internal monologue thus comes very close to the concept of poetry that we have today. The unconscious is one of the most difficult things to explain. We have vouchsafed only occasional glimpses into it. It can be read only in terms of those thoughts and fantasies which we bring into consciousness. It is this difficult phenomenon that the internal monologue has been devised to express. The situation is very fluid, indeed, because many people have forcefully denied the existence of anything like the unconscious. In any case, the unconsciousness cannot be expressed in its own unconscious form. We can only infer it from symbols emerging in the conscious expressions of the person, such as remembered dreams, fantasies, the slips of the tongue or the pen.

Virginia Woolf and the Stream-of-Consciousness Novel

Among the *stream-of-consciousness* novelists in England, Virginia Woolf is the most important name though Dorothy Richardson was the pioneer in this field. The traditional novel she realised, could not portray the fleeting impressions and the inner reality. In the first two novels, she tried the traditional forms, but finding them inadequate, abandoned them. She read and appreciated greatly James Joyce's *Ulysses*; in spite of its obscurity she admired its brilliancy, its incoherence and its sudden lightening flashes of significance. The fluidity of Joyce's prose, his avoidance of conventional transitions in his attempt to capture the *stream-of-consciousness* of his character left a lasting effect on Mrs. Woolf, particularly her style. Some of the experiments in *Monday or Tuesday* seem to have been suggested to her by her reading of *Ulysses*. Proust too had a considerable influence on her. Also, her characters seem to be guided by an intuition like that described by Bergson in his *Time and Free Will*. *Kew Gardens*, a story in *Monday or Tuesday*, is a story about life in the Bergsonian sense of the word—"a spiritual force, a vital impetus equal to 'pure', as distinct from chronological time, and equal to human consciousness when that consciousness attains to awareness, not measurable by any amount of chronological time (or space) when, that is, human consciousness attains to holding eternity in an hour."

However, these influences on Virginia Woolf should not be overemphasised. Virginia Woolf admired Joyce and Proust not just because she had read them, but because she recognised in their innovations something that would help her realize her own ideal. "Joyce's handling of the monologue interior, his presentation of consciousness through the characters' mingled retrospect and anticipation with the accompanying emancipation from chronology as also Proust's preoccupation with the quality of experience in time, his Bergsonian sense of duration etc.—all these had, no doubt, an effect on Virginia Woolf, but this effect could be there largely because she had formulated her own plans and was looking for the means to accomplishing them." And she is by no means a blind imitator of either the great masters of the new technique or the psychologists who furnished the theoretical framework for the *stream-of-consciousness* novel. Thus, though Virginia Woolf's characters appear to be guided by an intuition like that given by Bergson, the reality they grasp is different from that of Bergson. Her essential method is her own.

The older novelists had failed to portray life: they were preoccupied with the outside husk, seldom getting on to the inside kernel of life. When they presented the story chronologically, they divorced themselves from life, which is equal to human consciousness, and consciousness, modern psychology had proved, as also one knows from one's own experience, does not move in a straight line, it is a fluid existing simultaneously at a number of points in a person's total experience. Thus, fixing up a character on a single point, and allowing him to pursue his lop-sided train of thoughts, is obviously unrealistic. "Look within", she says, "and

life it seems is very far from being like this......Examine for a moment an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions. —trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms ; as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life on *Monday or Tuesday*, the accent falls differently from the old......so that if a writer were a free man, not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feelings and not convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest, no catastrophe in the accepted style......" "Life", Virginia Woolf continues, "is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged ; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end". Thus she disapproves of H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennet.for taking too much interest in the "solidity of fabric", they have lost them-selves in the trivial and transient outside. Wells and Bennet are materialists, whereas to her, Joyce and Proust are spiritualists for they try to capture the fleetingness of life. The reality can be com-prehended and delineated only if the novelist compreh·nds and delineates the numerous impressions that minds of the characters receive in their ordinary business of life.

In *Jacob's Room* Virginia Woolf studied the tremendousness of experience. For the first time, she makes no attempt to preserve the firm outlines of chronological events ; experience is broken down into a series of rapidly dissolving impressions, which merge into one another but are kept from complete dissolution by the meditative eye of the author, who keeps the flux of things completely in sight, and preserves the character sufficiently to be able to comment intermittently to intervene to explain her doubts and difficulties to the reader, shows a certain lack of confidence on the author's part in her own technique.

7

Virginia Woolf's Narrative Technique Or The Form of Virginia Woolf's Novels

Realistic Portrayal of Living Beings

Virginia Woolf, in her essay on *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown* said that Edwardian novelists had made tools and established conventions which do their business; and that business is not her business. For her, she declared, those conventions were ruin, those tools death.

Virginia Woolf's own experiments with the form of the novel were the result of that belief. According to her the business of a novelist was not merely to communicate human experience. What she wanted to do was to record what life felt like to living beings. This was also what Dorothy Richardson had discovered in 1913. But Virginia Woolf was not satisfied with the record of a single mind. She aimed at revealing the impression made by one individual upon others as also the impressions made on an individual by others ; she wanted to reveal human personality partly through its own self-consciousness and partly through the picture projected by it upon other minds. It was in *Jacob's Room* that she broke away from the traditional form of the novel and made an attempt to implement her new vision. There the narrator *i.e.*, the author tries to remove herself from the scene so that the reader may be able to see the subject through the eyes of the people in the book. But she is not entirely successful in eliminating herself from the scene ; *Jacob's Room* contains many passages of description, where events are recorded, comments are made not by the characters themselves but by their author. As against the direct comment which Virginia Woolf is compelled to make herself about Elizabeth Flanders, for instance, in her later novel the necessary facts are given through the reflections and comments of other people in the novel. *Mrs. Dalloway's* age and experience are brought out thus :

"A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright."

Nor is it only description and the record of event that brings the narrator forward in *Jacob's Room*—she is still, like her forerunners, though less continuously, present as commentator.

Objectivity

But the direction, in which already she is moving, is towards complete objectivity. It is not the objectivity of drama, which is limited to the enacted scene and spoken word. It is an objectivity in which the feelings, the meditations, the memories of the protagonists are projected, without intervention upon the mind of the reader. When James in *To the Lighthouse* emerges into manhood, we receive his impressions of the "world of the elderly," linked as Jacob's are with past memories and with projects for the future, through the medium of his own reflections.

The will to discover and record life as the people feel who live it, was the originating cause of Virginia Woolf's rejection of existing conventions. It was because of this that she had eliminated narration and comment. In *Jacob's Room*, however, certain needs arising out of her vision of the subject prevented her from achieving that purpose. She had yet to learn how to communicate all the facts that need to be known, how to mark the passage of time, how to indicate the point of view, without speaking in her own person. In this first experiment she is conscious of her difficulties and has not yet learnt the art to conceal her art. Thus she will recount Jacob's words, thoughts, acts and then—much as Fielding used to do—she will insert an essay upon the art of fiction.

"But though all this may very well be true—so Jacob thought and spoke—so he crossed his legs—filled his pipe—sipped his whisky, and once looked at his pocket-book rumpling his hair as he did so, there remains over something which can never be conveyed to a second person save by Jacob himself."

The essay interrupts the illusion; but it is an invaluable document, for it enumerates the difficulties which, later, her craftsmanship was to overcome.

The Form of Jacob's Room

Jacob's Room, because no adequate substitute has been devised to replace the old conventions, falls apart. The reader is left with the impression of a series of episodes, each of them conveyed with depth and subtlety, so that at each successive moment he is vividly aware of how life felt to Jacob, or how Jacob affected some other.

But the successive movements build up no whole that can be held in the mind. In the traditional novel the episodes are interwoven to compose a story. In that story one character is central and stands in some significant relation to the other characters and their stories. So for instance, the story of Emma is interwoven with the story of Jain Fairfax and with the story of Harriet Smith ; every other character in the book plays some part in those stories and the combined effect of all is to illuminate the central character. When the reader closes the book he has a complete pattern in his mind, the pattern by which Emma's emerging self knowledge has been communicated. To that emergence each of the other characters was contributory and Jane Austen selected the episodes so that they might effect it. The episodes of which *Jacob's Room* is composed are chosen to reveal the impact of Jacob's developing personality upon the people with whom he comes into contact. It must be of set purpose that we are given more of Jacob's reflection in other minds than of his own experience. But the result is that Jacob remains a nebulous young man, indeed almost any young man, and the reader does not fully participate in the powerful effect he makes upon others. Moreover, in so far as the writer has succeeded in effacing herself, the people she creates have to take her place. Consequently a number of persons become momentarily very prominent. From moment to moment, while they hold the stage, the reader is fascinated and deeply attentive. But ultimately his attention is dissipated and diffused. Too many disassociated, or only tenuously related demands have been made upon it. A similar effect is produced by a later, and in many ways a greater book than *Jacob's Room*, *The Years*.

The Form of the Years

In *The Years*, more subtle and complex reflections are given through a particular consciousness, and it is the number of people whom we are invited to know with this degree of intimacy that obscures the pattern of the whole. When a novelist uses the older convention of narrative and characterisation a larger number of characters living through a long stretch of time can be more easily united. The stories and the groups of characters in, for instance, *Middlemarch* are all related in a number of ways to the story of Dorothea. Minor characters are kept, by the novelist, in due subordination to major characters ; neither the events of their lives nor their experience of living are given prominence. The new method deepens the reader's intimacy with the persons in the book at the risk, if there are many of them, of impeding his width of view. He cannot see the wood for the trees. The trees are magnificent, and one returns to them again and again with renewed pleasure. Each character calls to mind vivid moments of experience and luminously distinct personalities. But what remains in the mind is a series of episodes rather than parts of the whole. The episodes illustrate the passage of time and the delivery of the human scene.

Emergence of an Art Form or a Convention

The total effect of *The Years* is too much like life itself ; the

book shares in the uncoordinated character of normal experience. This does not mean that Virginia Woolf's art is incapable of communicating experience that is wide as well as deep. But to do so she had to invent conventions as rigid or more rigid than the old ones that she discarded. This she does in her foremost satisfying novels, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* and *Between the Acts*. There are certain resemblances between them in structure and style. In each case a small group of people is selected, and through their closely interrelated experience the reader receives his total impression. In each case also, certain images, phrases and symbols bind the whole together. Apart from these general resemblances each of these novels is a fresh attempt to solve the problems raised by the departure from traditional conventions. Her first problem is to preserve the illusion of direct contact with human beings in the process of immediate and random experience. Moreover, the totality aimed at, a whole that reflects human consciousness, must include not only the impressions made by physical surroundings and by other human beings but also the threefold effect of time; the passing moments or hours; the voyage from youth to age; and the historic time, or time in relation to nation-wide and world-wide event.

Three years after *Jacob's Room*, in 1925 *Mrs. Dalloway* was published. The subject is similar in so far as the principal theme is one personality, affecting and affected by the others who come into contact with it. But in the later book the composition of the whole is superbly successful. The impression made upon the reader by the central personality is clear and full. The incidents or episodes are themselves even more vivid, but they cohere firmly together and finally leave an impression of unity. In *Mrs. Dalloway* a convention or art form has been evolved which is more than adequate to take the place of the older convention of narrative and characterization. The necessary circumscription is imposed by the narrow framework of time; the whole of the action takes place within one day. It moves between *Mrs. Dalloway's* preparation for her party in the morning and her presiding over it in the evening of the same day. Within this narrow frame, her life story from girlhood to her present age of fifty is gradually unfolded by means of contacts she makes. The story of Septimus Warren Smith, who impinges upon her consciousness early in the day and whose death throws a shadow over her party in the evening, is the means of introducing another set of characters. This group of characters represents a darker side of life and a more profound sense of the historic background against which the whole is set.

The major characters are no more than five and they stand out from the rest with a distinctive prominence; it is they alone who reveal their thoughts to the reader in prolonged and repeated soliloquies as well as in conversations. These five major characters move round each other in two concentric circles, Clarissa, Peter Walsh and (rather more faintly drawn) Richard Dalloway in the one, Septimus and Rezia Warren Smith in the other. Around each

of these two circles there is a ring of minor characters such as Sally Seton, Lady Bruton, Hugh Whitebread, Elizabeth Dalloway and, that important foil to Clarissa, Doris Kilman. Round the Warren Smith orbit move Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw through whose appearance at the party the two themes are ultimately interlocked.

But there is another point of view from which the subject of the book no longer appears to be the life story of Clarissa Dalloway, nor of Septimus Warren Smith, but human life itself—its tension between misery and happiness and its inevitable consummation in death.

Within the book there is a poetic pattern, probing to that deeper level at which the mind apprehends timeless values. There is also the prose pattern wherein the reader is given a picture of the modern world with its destructive forces of class struggle, economic insecurity and war. On this prose plane too is one aspect of Septimus, the sympathetic yet slightly mocking account of his intellectual aspirations and romantic notions before war shattered him and, at the same time, lifted him on to the plane of tragedy. On that poetic plane there are only love and death and the evanescent beauty of the world.

From now onwards Virginia Woolf planned her novels, with the exception of *The Years*, within a narrow frame work. She achieved this either by confining the action to a brief period of time, or by limiting the foreground characters to a small number or by employing both these devices. Despite the narrow area of time within which the story moves, she has contrived to give the reader an idea of what has preceded the action. In this method she is comparable with Ibsen, who while observing the three unities of time, action and place can so draw upon the memories of his characters that they unfold for the audience all that is relevant in their past histories.

In *To the Lighthouse* the outward structure is simple. It consists of three movements of unequal length and of two different kinds, as it were two acts linked by a chorus. Only ten characters make any prominent appearance and of those ten only seven, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, Lily, Mr. Bankes, Mr. Tansley, James and Cam reveal themselves fully in speech and in soliloquy.

The Use of Poetic-Prose

As in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the form is the vehicle for two kinds of experience ; one on the plane of prose and the other on the plane of poetry. The double effect is analogous to that of the greatest poetic drama, and to some kinds of lyric poetry, in which the surface statement has folded in itself the poetic meaning. The surface statement can be summarized or defined while the other can only be suggested, since it depends upon the thoughts and feelings evoked by imagery and rhythm. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's novels convey two

different kinds of meaning to each of which the form is beautifully adapted.

On the prose plane *To the Lighthouse* tells about the Ramsay family and their relations to one another. On the other plane the lighthouse is a poetic symbol with an uncircumscribed power of suggestion. For the reader, as for Mrs. Ramsay, the altering light and shadow of the lighthouse beam symbolizes the rhythm of joy and sorrow in human life and the alternating radiance and darkness of even the most intimate human relationship.

In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* the concentration necessary for the full effect of Virginia Woolf's mode of presentation is achieved by limiting the time covered by the action, as well as by restricting the number of foreground characters.

8

Virginia Woolf's Style

An Individual Peculiar Style

It was difficult for Virginia Woolf to portray in ordinary prose the fleeting glimpses into reality that her novels seek to give. The experience dissolved into tenuous insight had to be organised. For all this she required a style which could cope with the problems, which the English novel was facing in a big way for the first time. She seeks to destroy or to transcend the dividing line, the horizons of experience, vision and understanding which separate one human personality from another, and to display in its reality—the reality being a compound of the spiritual, the emotional, the rational and the irrational—everything that goes to make a human personality. It was a very novel attempt indeed, and naturally required a new style ; if the experiment was to succeed. So it was very essential for her to evolve a style of her own. And this she does. Her style is a really individual peculiar style, adapted to the kind of work she had to do. Even in one of her early novels *Jacob's Room* her style separates her from all the earlier English novelists. It was an entirely new way of starting the novel as she opens *Jacob's Room* : "So of course wrote Betty Flanders pressing her heels rather deeper into the sand, there was nothing for it but to leave."

Contrast it with how Samuel Butler opens his *Way of All Flesh* : "When I was a small boy at the beginning of the century I remember an old man who wore knee-breeches and worsted stockings, and who used to hobble about in the streets of our village with the help of a stick......"

There is a world of difference between the two ways of writing.

The *Jacob's Room* was, as said earlier, one of Virginia Woolf's earlier novels and its style was experimental with all the extravagance and imperfection that often go with the practice of a new idea. The balance had not yet been struck. The opening itself is not very satisfactory, because it leaves too much unsaid. And often Virginia Woolf has to step in herself with confidential asides and rhetorical questions oddly reminiscent of Charles Lamb.

The Poetic Style of Mrs. Dalloway

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the balance is struck. Mrs. Dalloway has come back from the market and has sat down to mend her dress for her party in the evening, when "Quiet descended on her, calm, content, as her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them, very tightly to the belt. So on a summer's day, waves collect, overbalance and fall ; collect, and fall, and the whole world seems to be saying, that is all ; more and more ponderously, and even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, 'That is all'. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee, the wave breaking, the dog barking far away and barking." The words in this prose mean more than what they actually say. Simply, Clarissa is mending her silk dress, quiet, contented and reflecting Virginia Woolf enlarges the description of her character's situation using an expanded simile. The impersonal body that lies on the beach is Clarissa herself. But the picture which the simile evokes is assumed to be a picture of an experience common to the reader, the writer and the character. It is this unstated assumption with which we agree which gives this prose power to enlarge stated meaning and to compel sympathy.

Phrasing, rhythm, rhyming and sounds have a great deal to do with this kind of prose. "Drawing the silk smoothly in its gentle pause" shows soft sound and has sleepy rhythm. "Collect, overbalance and fall ; collect and fall......that is all .....that is all... collects, lets fall," introduces a refrain. In short, we are in the world of poetry. She echoes sounds and significant words, and this is a very effective way of enlarging the meaning of the explicit statement in prose. In English prose, this kind of effect is achieved by those writers, whose style is modelled upon the classics, most of all perhaps by Gibbon. But the classical method is precise and logical, Virginia Woolf's is allusive and emotional. The repetition of a significant word or phrase, evokes a response not in the mind alone.

Virginia Woolf's style may be termed 'Poetic'. The experience dissolved into fleeting glimpses is organised in a way that comes close to lyric poetry. Her use of words is almost poetic. Her metaphors remain in the reader's mind long after her purpose in making them has been forgotten. Sometimes, as in the long and meandering simile of the body lying in the sun on the beach, she seems to live half in and half out of the world of metaphor. The images which her metaphors evoke are those which we find in poetry, more vivid and startling than the metaphors of normal prose. Metaphors like "A great brush swept across through his mind like the pulse of a perfect heart or life struck straight through the street ; then for that moment she had an illumination ; a match burning in a crocus an inner meaning almost expressed", do not belong to the realms of

prose. For one thing, they are not all metaphors from the visible world. "They are often collections of ideas made possible by that transmutation of the laws of association and reality which is normally possible only to the genius of poetry." Life striking through London like the pulse of a heart—surely, no one looks for such a metaphor in prose. A candle in a crocus, is a poetic image of the same type as "I should have been a pair of ragged claws" and many others in Eliot's poetry. Allusions and images, rhythm, refrain and metaphors—all these combine to make Virginia Woolf's style poetic.

"This poetic prose," as R. L. Chambers puts it "becomes the channel for all the stream-of-consciousness, or rather the bed of a sea of consciousness whose tide sets in a certain direction but on whose surface or beneath whose waters straws and faces float or whirl. There are waters over which Virginia Woolf pilots her raft so securely and with such ease and certainty that it is a delight to share the fascination of her voyage."

Style is the Man

Virginia Woolf is a prose writer of genius. If style tells a man, her prose style tells that Virginia Woolf is a cultured woman. She uses words with a keen sense of their rhythmic and musical potentialities, her style is richly figurative. She writes in *Modern Fiction*, "any method is right, every method is right that expresses what we wish to express if we are writers, that brings us, closer to the novelist's intention if we are readers." And, it was in this figurative style that Virginia Woolf could express her purpose and the reader could best comprehend her intention.

Free from Artificiality

In keeping with her purpose as a writer—to express the stream of thoughts as it flows—Virginia Woolf's style is free from artificiality, affectation and mannerism. She, obviously, did not like all these things. That is why she denounces the essayist, Mr. Belloc, whose style, she says, comes to us not with the natural richness of the speaking voice, but is strained and thin and full of mannerism like the voice of a man shouting through a megaphone to a crowd on a windy day. Surely, her own style is very different, it is indeed the speaking voice, though the speaker is for the most part speaking to himself. Her style is a living style, quite natural, without any effort to force things. Her novels not only reveal the stream of consciousness of their characters but flow like a stream themselves. There is a spontaneity in Virginia Woolf's way of writing, which is peculiarly her own. The words come naturally to her as breathing to a man. Because her novels flow like a stream, there is no room in them for pedantry or scholasticism.

9

Time in Virginia Woolf

Rigid Time-Sequence in the Earlier Novel

The novelists before Virginia Woolf, restricted as they were to the telling of a story, were cramped by the necessity of keeping to the strict sequence of events. The Victorians—Dickens, Thackeray and Trallope—whose novels often appeared in serial form, were particularly bound by this sequence. The reader wanted to know what was going to happen next and the novelist had to follow a rigid scheme of. "continued in our next instalment" This made experiment and development very difficult.

This tradition of story telling was stoutly attacked by Virginia Woolf. Castigating Scott as a "story teller, and nothing more," she observes that "a story is the lowest form of literary organism, that the novelists' unnatural preoccupation with love is largely a reflection of his own state of mind while he composes—every page has a hint or a suggestion which makes us stop to think or wish to contradict." This led her to conclude that the novel in England, at any rate, was not a work of art. She advises the novelist to free himself from the clutches of tradition, and come out into 'the light of things', to quote Wordsworth. She says about the novelist : "He might cut adrift from the eternal tea-table and the plausible and the prosperous formulas which are supposed to represent the whole of our human adventure. But then the story might wobble ; the plot might crumble ; ruin might seize upon the characters. The novel, in short, might become a work of art." Before Virginia Woolf postulated thus, E. M. Forster had criticised the time obsession in fiction, and had gone to the extent of ridiculing the idea of having a plot always.

The Dissolution of Time : Its Tenability

At the beginning of the century, psychology had shown that consciousness did not move in a straight line. On the contrary it was a fluid existing simultaneously at a number of points. Hence to present a story in a chronological sequence, ignoring all but the only one direction of the character's mind with which the novelist was dealing, was manifestly unrealistic. So, for a realistic portrayal of a character, he had to be caught in the flux of his consciousness, when his mind, instead of moving chronologically, was repeatedly

moving back and forth in time. And when the mind is so moving back and forth, the treatment of time becomes vitally important.

Virginia Woolf who set out to portray reality in her novels could not subscribe to the chronological movement of the story. Time had to be dissolved : the division between the past and present and present and future had to be done away with ; in fact, past, present and future had to lose their separate identities and had to be treated as a flow where all the three became part of One Time. But it was only in *Mrs. Dalloway* that Virginia Woolf was able to achieve this dissolution of time, a disruption of time pattern within space of a full-length novel. *Monday or Tuesday* before had been only a series of sketches. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Virginia Woolf restricts the action of the novel to a single day ; a single district in London, "a single in the round" character (thus achieving the three classical unities), while employing the devices of memory and time to shift to the stream of consciousness of one character from that of the other. The device of memory is used when the transition from one character to the other is to take place in mind of the character whose train of thought is being pursued at the moment. Thus, towards the end of the novel when Sally Seton meets Peter Walsh at Clarissa's party and finds him in none-too-good a shape, she goes back in the past, remembering many incidents, which show Peter Walsh to be a sentimental, awkward kind of a man.

Time-Sequence in Mrs. Dalloway

In *Mrs. Dalloway* the line between past and present is blurred. The characters live simultaneously in their past as well as in their present—the transition from the one to the other being only a moments' job. As soon as a particular character comes in contact with something or somebody that reminds him of something or somebody associated with him earlier, he has a flash-back. The best example of this is provided by Mrs. Dalloway herself in the beginning of the novel ; when going to the market to buy flower, the fine breeze of the morning reminds her of days gone by when she was just a girl of eighteen, and in love with Peter Walsh. Peter Walsh would come and talk to her while she was standing on the 'French' window. This sets her thinking on Peter Walsh, and as she undertakes a monologue interior, we have a flood of light shed on Peter Walsh—his eccentricities, his career, his love for her, why she refused to marry him, and a host of other things. But while she thinks of the past, she is not obvious of the present. She is moving through London, meeting people, buying flowers and participating from a distance in the excitement of the crowd that had gathered to have a glimpse of the royal personage supposed to be sitting in a car, and also looking at the aeroplane advertising toffee. And it is not only the past and the present which mingle freely in Mrs. Dalloway's mind, the future too is a part of the stream of One Time. While Mrs. Dalloway is going over the past and acting in the present, the idea of the party that she is proposing to give in the evening is all the time on her, and she is preparing herself and planning for that.

The wider questions of worthwhileness of life, the existence in the present times, when among other things, war seems to have planted a sense of insecurity among the masses, the general behaviour of mankind—the questions that relate to all times—also do not escape her thought stream.

Time in "To the Lighthouse"

In '*To the Lighthouse*' Virginia Woolf plays other tricks with time. In the first section, the action is restricted to one evening, the hours between six o'clock and dinner. As a matter of fact, even these few hours have been foreshortened to a single moment, for in obedience to Mrs. Ramsay, "time stands still here".

Virginia Woolf experiments ceaselessly with time, not only because she found the time-sequence inadequate to her conception of the structure of reality (though this is the primary reason) but also because the time-sequence was inadequate for the simple rendering of character, that is, to the display of her creatures' inner life. In *Orlando*—unlike in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, where the life of the heroine is foreshortened to the space of just one day—the life of the heroine is stretched to the perspective of four centuries and there is a change of sex from masculine to feminine. All the metamorphoses, the complications and explications are necessary to elucidate that most mysterious entity—the human spirit. Obviously, moving in strict time-sequence, fettered by chronology, this education is not possible. *Orlando* is first a man, then woman, first in love and then loved, first jilting and then jilted, a man of action as well as a poet, a woman of fashion and a Victorian Lady. The undertaking is prodigious and there is no room for the cramping time-sequence.

10

Symbolism in Virginia Woolf

Introductory Comments

All critics have recognized the importance of symbols in the writing of Virginia Woolf, a corollary to its poetic nature, which they may praise or condemn but cannot fail to acknowledge. ***Mrs. Dalloway***, ***Orlando***, and above all *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves* have proved profitable ground for symbol-hunters.

The artist in Virginia Woolf is at the service of reality : her sources and her skill are devoted to stressing reality, not to distorting or concealing it. The comments she makes on *The Waves*, the novel in which the symbolic meaning is the denset while the art is most deliberate, are reassuring :

> "What interests me in the last stage was the freedom and boldness with which my imagination picked up, used and tossed aside all the images, symbols which I had prepared. I am sure that this is the right way of using them—not in set pieces, as I had tried first, coherently, but simply as images, never making them work out ; only suggest. Thus I hope to have kept the sound of the sea and the birds, dawn and garden subconsciously present, doing their work under the ground."

And with reference to *The Years*, she sums up that process of writing which allows the act of literary creation to be considered like any other act : "Who was it who said through the unconscious one comes to the conscious, and then again to the unconsciousness."

Nature

The rhythms of nature, as we have seen, may be taken as a manifestation, perceptible to the senses, of the process of Becoming, and thus as the very essence of Virginia Woolf's concept of time. The constant presence in the novels, even before their meaning and metaphysical content are clearly envisaged by the author, reveals a singularly acute sensitivity to these phenomena, which is at the root of the developments we have traced. Even in *The Voyage Out*, where the setting and the natural phenomena are often associated with dramatic moments in a way that recalls the "pathetic fallacy" of the

Romantics, it happens that the seasons of the year, the different times of day, take on the substance and meaning which pervade them increasingly with each new novel. That marvellous autumn like a lingering summer, prolonged by the eternal sunshine of Santa Marina, where London fogs are unknown, represents that period of respite and blossoming, that suspension of the course of things and of lives, that holiday season for the soul, which we find in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *The Years* and finally in *Between the Acts*. What we have here is a profound physical harmony, gradually communicated to the whole sensibility and to the mind.

But if in the interlude, the fixed time, of *The Voyaye Out*, "the change of season from winter to spring had made very little difference," this is not the case elsewhere. We can leave aside the winter of *Night and Day*, with its uncertainties and doubts, its misunderstandings, its estrangements, and the too early spring that follows it. It is in *Jacob's Room* that we find the first representation of the true Woolfian winter : the immobility and silence of the hard earth, swept by icy blasts ; the night of the year : the season when life, driven from outside retires within itself, and in its withdrawal, amid the threat that surround it, experiences a forecast of death. It is the season of the old servant Crosby and the air raid in *The Years*, it is the season of Bernard's "summing up", the season of hopeless disillusionment. Can the Great Frost in *Orlando*, with its carnival and its love making, its brilliancy and its vitality, efface this vision of winter ? Surely not. Spring and autumn, on either side of summer, are moments of turbulence : wind, rain, buds bursting, dead leaves drifting, clouds and birds flying, the sky and the temperature both unstable ; these are essentially seasons of change, heavy with hope or with the nostalgia of leave taking. But if Virginia Woolf renders all their latent mutability and richness, they are not her seasons. They are moments of passage, strictly speaking. They represent a variety and entertainments, indeed, and she welcomes them eagerly, but with a certain anguished reserve. They lack serenity. They make one aware of the lapse of time and of life—even spring's fertility heralds maturity and decay. At bottom these are hostile seasons, the destructive equinoxes. It was in spring that Virginia Woolf would break off work and go abroad ; it was in April and October that she suffered from influenza, headaches and depressions—it was in April that she killed herself.

Night and Day

The alternation of day and night, the manifold meanings of which can be fitted to the different pairs of balanced forces in *Night and Day*, recur in all the novels. This provides at every instant, the image of the mind's constant rhythmical alternation between darkness and light, concentration and dispersal, attention to life and attention to the outside world. Day with its light, giving shape and colour to objects, is the creative presence of the universe, reborn at every dawn. For Jacob, Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay, Orlando, the characters in *The Waves*, those of *The Years* and *Between the Acts*,

it is the marvellous fantasmagoria of life. The interludes in *The Waves* depict this continuous, constantly changing creation ; they are hymn to the daily world revealed to our eyes. But if day represents life in its richness and splendour, the dazzlement which accompanies it and the multiplicity which it imposes represent disorder and confusion. Night, obliterating one colour after another one form after another, the whole of visible world, leaving us alone with what faint afterglows of vanished light are left within us, will restore our integrity, our self-control, the power of understanding after having felt : the vision, which sight had concealed from us. Ralph and Katharine had asked night, romantically indeed yet sincerely, to help them clarify their uncertainties. It is in the heart of darkness that Clarissa's world and that of Mrs. Ramsay take on meaning.

Day : sensation, contact ; Night : consciousness, fusion—the two complimentary modes of existence ; they are the rhythms of Virginia Woolf's book as they are of her life. Their contradiction, their antagonism are within her : her passion for both was equal. One cannot help thinking of those months, night creatures flying in to burn themselves in the light, which in the beginning, were to have given its title and its symbolic motifs to what became *The Waves*.

The Waves

In *Jacob's Room*, the waves begin to awake echoes beyond the shores on which they break. To begin with, amid the din of wind and rain that rage around the sleeping child they pass unnoticed. But in the radiant peace that reigns about the boat when Jacob and Timmy go sailing, "the waves slapped the boat, and crashed, with regular and appalling solemnity, against the rocks". The mysterious force with which these words are charged is intensified by the reminder, on the next page, of the perennial nature of the sea swell : "Very lonely it must be in winter, with the wind sweeping over those hills, and the waves dashing on the rocks." At every instant life is being lifted up, dropped again, threatened, while the whisper and the sign of the waves remain ; but on the last page it swells to merge into the sound of guns, with the stroke of destiny that kills Jacob. The essence of the theme is there ; we might follow analogous developments in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the image, most frequently associated with "Fear no more, suggests peace, even if this is a forewarning of death. The waves are the movement of life carrying us towards the shore, irresistible but on the whole beneficent.

Birds, Butterflies and Fishes

To the waves must be added birds, butterflies and fishes. These are secondary themes, but they recur constantly like so many reminders of a primordial aspect of reality, like the sudden emergence of truth. The gull rocked by the wave or tossed by the storm

against the glass of the lighthouse, the cloud of rooks or starlings dropping on to a tree and rising the moment after to spread its meshes against the evening sky. The butterflies clinging to flowers or beating against window-panes, mysteriously going to their fate : a lamp lost in the darkness of the forest. The fish crossing pool or pond as swift as an arrow, exploring submerged worlds ; the fin cleaving the surface of the water like some obscure sign breaking into consciousness. Moreover, the symbolic value of wave, fish, butterfly and bird is completed and enriched by their participation into elements : these being so dominant in what one might call Virginia Woolf's cosmogony that they have constantly provided the vocabulary used by critics to define her work.

Water and Air

All the images that Virginia Woolf constantly borrows from the world of water—nets, lines, driving, floatsam and jetsam, boats and sails—suggest a profound intimacy, a sort of harmony between her nature and water. Air is complementary to water in the representation of the universe. These are the two fluidities between which we maintain our permanence ; "...the stir in the air is the describable agitation of life"—agitation, not development or change implying fantasy and impulse. Air is the unpredictable animator that provokes the play of emotion on the earth's face, that now sets grass and leaves shivering, corn rippling, now shakes and twists the trees, tosses the rain against the window ; lashes the pane with a branch.

Earth and Fire

In contrast with the fluid elements akin to life, to being, to thought, we find the earth. Not the fertile earth, but rock—hard, permanent, not to be assimilated, the obstacle against which consciousness stumbles ; against which the waves break. Jacob discovers the world, disillusionment there. This is the aspect of the universe most alien to Virginia Woolf. The fourth element, fire, seems not to assume any special significance. But if fire as such has no place in Virginia Woolf's work, on the other hand light has a place everywhere. Light is identical with day, is the very soul of day, and yet, as if by some basic need of human nature it is infinitely multiplied ; firelight in the hearth, candle light, lights in lonely windows in the country side, innumerable lights in cities by night. The way they flash on, dim or brighten, and die out suggests the flickering nature of life itself. Lighthouse naturally presents the symbol at the peak of its development, as lodestar and distant guide, intermittent and yet enduring, identical with being.

Tree

One last symbol borrowed from nature must be mentioned—the tree with all its derivatives : leaves, roots, the forests. The forest figures in *The Voyage Out*. It shelters the love affairs of Terence

and Rachel, and is indeed a manifestation of that vital impulse which is always present in the work of Virginia Woolf. But it is in *Mrs. Dalloway* that the tree becomes truly symbolic motif; it stands for Clarissa's life, for that of Septimus, for Rezia's. It is the beauty and strength of creation, standing firm against all assaults. Throughout *The Waves*, trees are like the foam of life on the surface of the earth, surviving the eternal flux; they are the first to catch the light, and from them rises the birds' song of joy.

11

Virginia Woolf and The Lyrical Novel

Definition

A novel normally tells a story ; in it we look for characters with whom we can identify ourselves. Another good quality in a novel is that it has action which is interesting and engaging. Sometimes the main interest of a book of fiction lies in the ideas with which it deals and the moral choice it offers. As against the novel, lyrical poetry suggests the expression of feelings or themes in musical or pictorial pattern. A lyrical novel is a blend of lyrical poetry and the novel in the usual sense. It shifts the reader's attention from men and events to a formal design. The usual scenery of fiction becomes a texture of imagery, and characters appear as personal for the self. A lyrical novel generally has a poetic style or purple prose, but these properties alone do not make a lyric-novel. In fact, any novel may rise to such heights of language or present its narrative in imagery. The distinguishing feature of a lyrical novel is that it transcends the causal and temporal movement of narrative within the framework of fiction ; it is a lyrical genre that uses the novel to perform the function of a poem. Also, a lyrical novel has a different concept of objectivity. It is not always realistic in the sense that it is not a matter of prime importance in such a novel to reproduce external life truthfully. In a traditional novel, the characters and their milieu interact, and objectivity is achieved through the dramatic and narrative form. The lyrical novel, on the other hand, combines the world in a strangely inward yet aesthetically objective form. Its form is neither dramatic nor didactic, but poetic in the limited sense of being lyrical. A lyrical poem does not objectify men and times, nor does it merely localise events. It objectifies an experience and a theme for the elucidation of men and their lives. Lyrical novels describe pleasures and pains as extended lyrics. Their objectivity lies in a form uniting self and other, a picture that detaches the writer from his personal in a separate, formal world.

It is, however, not possible to rigidly define the form of a lyrical novel. In fact, a novel becomes lyrical not by any proclaimed form but by poetic manipulation of narrative types, which writers

have found ready-made, are those which they have constructed within an existing tradition of the novel.

Why Virginia Woolf took to Lyrical Novel ?

Among the English novelists, Virginia Woolf is foremost in the lyrical technique. English novel, before her had sought to deal with characters and scenes in their broad temporal relations amidst varying events. Not because she was essentially opposed to this tradition, but because Jane Austen represented the climax of this method, the English novel could not go beyond this point without the infusion of new technique. She sets out on a quest for a mediating form through which she could convey simultaneously a picture of life and manners and a corresponding image of minds. She wanted to represent "the essence of character and the quality of experience without indulging in superficialities." Her essay "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown" opened the door of the novel to fresh conventions, foreshadowing a lyrical manner for English novel through the conversion of characters and scenes into symbolic imagery.

Virginia Woolf sought to convey inner life and this could be best done in a lyrical manner. But her path towards lyricism was marked not only by a desire to convey inner life, but also by her consciousness of the artist's egocentric predicament and her intense anxiety about the danger of solipsism. That is, her attitude emerged also from her impatience with the purely subjective writing which prevailed in England of her times. Poetry begins with the self but leads to depersonalization. In "Narrow Bridges of Art", writing on poetic drama, Virginia Woolf suggests some of the ways in which the novelist could move towards depersonalization. Since the conventional novel of motives and environments had proved insufficient, she suggests that its form should be such that it provides like poetry "the outline rather than the details, and stands further back from life in order to achieve the symbolic distance of impersonality." Things like loving and hating are to give way to subtler, simultaneously more impersonal and more private relationship with such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset, life, death and fate. Such a novel, she thought, would "give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude. Such a novel would render a vision of the mind's conversation with life, rather than being just psychological or social." "The psychological novelist has been prone to limit psychology to the psychology of personal intercourse. We long for ideas, for dreams, for imagination, for poetry."

Her Lyrical Method

Rejecting the analysis of motives, Virginia Woolf sought to study men's relation with himself and others, "his impersonal relationship with life as a whole—his soliloquy in solitude. And she identifies 'Poetry' with impersonality. Thus Emily Bronte in *Wuthering Heights* gives us a universal picture of life in its essential or

archetypal forms. Virginia Woolf says that Bronte is a poet because the emotion she projects "wings......its way past the daily conduct of ordinary people and allies itself with the inarticulate passion." Emily Bronte moves from the narrow personal emotions to the wider universal feelings of the human race and its relation with the "eternal powers." Life is freed ; it is no longer dependant on facts. We are face to face with the universal powers. In the same way, the symbolism of Hardy is poetic because it deals with fate, God, the impersonal elements. Virginia Woolf is also dealing with things which concern not only the individual, who happens to be her medium in a particular situation, she is interested in focussing attention on the problem of living. The facts are relevant but they are there more to serve as spring-board for leaping into the wider questions. She obtains a liberation from the facts through the facts themselves. Impersonal values and concrete facts rather than pure subjectivity define a poetic method which Virginia Woolf applies to the novel.

As Ralph Freedman says, in her search for a form in which the inner and the outer can be combined, Virginia Woolf conceived of the moment as a contraction of the manifold elements of life into significant images or scenes. In addition to this literary use, the moment also serves the epistomological function of clarifying the implications of consciousness for the artist's experience of life, a version of the imagination. Consciousness combines disparate elements and form ; these elements thus combined, the moment moves to associations and memories which expand perceptions into scenes. But when the perceptions are being expanded into scenes, the consciousness always remains aware of the objects which feed its cognition, and realizes that for the time being these things are freed from their time-bound existence. For Virginia Woolf, the inner and the outer are included in a single whole. The mind recognizes relations between experience and its objects, isolated from the stream of experience upon intense concentration but incapable of enduring in time.

Virginia Woolf's lyrical narrative is based on a design in which various contents of consciousness are juxtaposed. The method is to "distil a significance out of the data discovered by the personal sensibility and by projecting that significance through the minds of others, to maintain an unstable equilibrium between lyrical and narrative art" (David Daiches). This definition of lyricism shows how the poet's awareness can be the focus of a work that is also composed of individual "moments" of its character. The unstable equilibrium between the lyrical and narrative art shows how Virginia Woolf brilliantly achieves the telescoping of the poet's lyrical self and the novelist's omniscient point of view. It is a case of unified sensibility, that is, a blending of the objective and subjective, which is considered to be the best form of poetry ; particularly modern poetry. For Virginia Woolf, poetry is a symbolic relationship between the individual self and its range of experience. Thus, the omniscient self of the poet—novelist is crucial to her concept of lyrical novel.

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Virginia Woolf's Art of Characterisation

Old Convention and Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf abandoned the conventional practice of drawing up finished characters in fiction. To her, it was unrealistic to sum up men and women ; she would not give her readers the illusion that human beings could be covered with a formula or that their identity was constant and definable. Yet, it is true, of her novels as those of George Eliot and Jane Austen, that the reader's interest is centred in the human beings which their author has created in them. However, there is world of difference between the way in which Virginia Woolf created her characters and the one in which her predecessors had done that. Both George Eliot and Jane Austen, as we know, were masters in the art of drawing life-size rounded characters, and in this respect so different is Virginia Woolf from them that E. M. Forster writes of her :

> "She could seldom so portray a character that it was remembered afterwards on its own account, as Emma is remembered, for instance, or Dorothea...or Sophia..."

It is generally said that Virginia Woolf failed to provide us a gallery of memorable portraits as other great novelists had provided. But we must remember that she never intended to do that kind of a thing. Her goal was very different from theirs and as such, she developed a different method of characterisation, which, naturally produced a different effect.

However, Virginia Woolf only gradually developed the new method of characterisation. In her first two novels some of the characters are introduced in a traditional way. In the case of Hilbery, for instance, the essential characteristics of an outline portrait are there ; the key to the character is given. Mr. Hilbery is an individual, not a type. His main characteristics are easily remembered and can be developed and confirmed by his subsequent behaviour. But even in these early books, the characters that most interest us cannot be summed up. When Mary Datchet attempts to find a label for Katherine we are left in no doubt about its inadequacy.

Search for Realism

After 1909 the aspects of life in which Virginia Woolf could believe with conviction ceased to include clearly defined characters. The people in her later books frequently express her own unwillingness to circumscribe human beings within the compass of 'a character'. Mrs. Dalloway, for instance "would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or that". Or as Mrs. Ramsay reflecting on the nature of the self says..."one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep ; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by."

When Virginia Woolf became fully conscious that conventional method of characterisation was not fit to interpret her own vision of human beings, she sought for other means of communicating it. It was in *Jacob's Room* that she, for the first time, wholly rejected the old method, but in this novel her new technique is not yet used with the ease and assurance which she was later to acquire. Jacob is never clearly described and he seldom reveals himself to the reader by what he says or does. Instead, we derive our impressions about him from the effect he produces on other people in the novel. And the impact of one personality upon another becomes in all her books the important means of composing the portraits of human beings.

In *Jacob's Room* Virginia Woolf expresses a conviction that our knowledge of one another is incomplete, but, nonetheless our fellow-beings do arouse in us profound and valued feelings. From this conviction springs Virginia Woolf's individual art of creating human beings. The method is cumulative, and it is therefore impossible to isolate from her books a portrait which epitomises a particular character either by means of description or dramatisation. Though we cannot assemble a full-length character, covering all the traits, yet it is not very correct to say as E. M. Forster does that the beings that Virginia Woolf creates are less memorable than the characters in other great works of fiction. Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Mrs. Ramsay each of the main personalities in *Between the Acts* and many more of her characters stick to the reader's memory long after he has read the books in which they occur and enlarge his capacity for imaginative sympathy. It is sympathy rather than judgement that Virginia Woolf invokes. Her personages are apprehended rather than comprehended. Increasingly, the writer removes herself from the books ; the illusion of all seeing eye is replaced by the illusion that we are seeing by glimpses, with our own imperfect vision. However, we see much more in the books than in normal experience. Not only we are given the impressions made on other minds, but also the impressions received and formulated by the diverse persons whose lives are interwoven for us and who form the pattern of the book.

Characters Caught in Flux

Virginia Woolf's 'vision of life' taught her to emphasise the fluidity of human life rather than its fixity. She perceived the variety of impressions made by one person upon the people around him and his own ever-changing consciousness of his own surroundings. As a result of this perception, instead of defining an identity or epitomising it in a particular incident, she invited us to discover it by living in the minds of her characters or in the minds of those who come in contact with the character in question. Such a discovery can be made, obviously, by a gradually acquired intimacy. Understanding is cumulative. The power of communicating with profound insight and discriminating exactness the experiences which are widespread and produce in the reader a sense of recognition is an essential part of Virginia Woolf's creative gift, though it is not the whole. It is developed fully in *The Waves*. In this novel, she does away with not only the outlined or the summarised character, but also the differentiated style in thought and speech which is an alternative way of determining individuality. The six principal characters from their childhood to old age express themselves in the same subtle and imaginative idiom. Interest is focussed on their inward experience. Even so, because of the small number of persons presented and the gradual unfolding of their minds the reader becomes intimate with each and the six stand clearly differentiated not only from one another, but from themselves at different periods of their lives. The content of the consciousness expressed by each is always consistent both with the individual and the time of life.

Capturing Character's Stream of Consciousness

In all of Virginia Woolf's novels after the first two, personality is revealed as much by the record of an inner monologue as by action and conversation. This is achieved by a continual shifting from mind to mind. The fresh morning breeze reminds Mrs. Dalloway of Peter Walsh and the mental journey that she takes into her past, reveals to the reader the essential aspects of his character. We come to know the kind of jilted lover, the unsuccessful man in life that Peter Walsh was. Later on, Peter indulges in self-revelatory monologue and broods over his relationship with Mrs. Dalloway, contrasting with Clarissa Dalloway the major's wife whom he proposes to marry, as also the prospects of this married life with the shape of things that would have been there if Clarissa had married him. Towards the end of the novel, in Clarissa's party, Peter Walsh meets Sally Seton. She remembers many a small incident in Peter's past life and coupling the present and past together she seems to think that he has drawn a blank in life. Now, to draw Peter Walsh's character one has to put together the impressions of various people including himself about him. This practice of portraying character from the comments made by others is common enough in fiction. What distinguishes Virginia Woolf from others is the predominance that monologue interior has in throwing up the various traits of a character throughout the novel. Similarly Mrs. Dalloway emerges as a complete character because we know her husband, Peter Walsh,

Sally Seton, Miss Kilman and many others in whose minds we see her reflected. And we are present either directly or by sharing the memories of diverse people at a number of crucial moments in her life in which her personality expresses itself.

Like most novelists, Virginia Woolf can communicate fully the experiences of only a limited number of human types. In the main, because she focussed her vision on the indefinable, fluid personality rather than on the definite and settled 'character', she concentrated only on those characters in whose minds she could most fully enter and with whose eyes she could imagine herself looking out upon the world. The variety of people whom she knew so fully well and the range of experience over which she had complete mastery was small, indeed. It was only the upper-middle class society that Virginia Woolf lived in and fully understood. Naturally, it is from that strata of society that we have subtle insight into character.

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Virginia Woolf : Theory of Fiction

Her Interest in "Character"

Mrs. Woolf explained her own theory in her famous essay "Modern Fiction" in *The Common Reader (First Series)*. The distinctive quality of the novelist, she says, is permanent interest in "character in itself". "I believe that all novels deal with character, and that it is to express character—not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire—that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose and undramatic, so very elastic and alive, has been evolved." Thus did she express her concern with character, and of her method she wrote : "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however, disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight of incident scores upon the consciousness."

The essay 'Modern Fiction' is largely taken up with destructive criticism of the Edwardians :

> "materialists...they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body...they write of important things...they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring."

Life escapes H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennet :

> "look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on any ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms ; and as they fall as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old...Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged ; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."

An Innovator

This may be inadequate psychology, says Frank W. Bradbrook ; it may involve a too passive conception of perception, but it describes what life meant for Virginia Woolf, and it made necessary the creation of new techniques and methods. Plot, character, comedy, tragedy, and the concentration on "love interest", the old conventional themes and categories, were no longer adequate to communicate the stream of the modern consciousness. Virginia Woolf had certain models for what may be called the 'hit-or-miss' style, such as the Elizabethan novelists, particularly Thomas Nashe, odd eccentrics such as Sterne, and, in her own day, James Joyce. These writers, rather than Thackeray, Thomas Hardy, and Joseph Conrad, whom she also esteemed, provided her with something in the nature of a tradition, though she 'felt the lack of a convention, and how serious a matter it is when the tools of one generation are useless for the next' (*The Captain's Death Bed*). Her attitude is primarily that of the innovator, experimenting, conscious of infinite possibilities, and ready to try anything. There is no such thing as 'the proper stuff of fiction ; every thought ; every quality of brain and spirit drawn upon ; no perception comes amiss' (*The Common Reader, First Series*). Such all-inclusiveness has its dangers and in trying to record everything, in refusing to select and discriminate between the significance and value of different experiences, the novelist may merely end by reproducing the chaos from which it is the function of intelligence to save us.

Emergence of a New Conception of the Novel

The innovations of Henry James and Conrad had made their limitations clear. With his insight and technical ability James made all too evident the slick emptiness of H. G. Wells and Galsworthy. The Georgians tried to probe beneath the surface of society and human character, down to where they felt the truth was hidden. In the Georgian novel there is expressed a wish to strip the dead outer covering to cast off what is mere appearance and to find underneath the reality that has been hidden by a superimposed husk. And it is this desire to probe the inside-of man and to find out a technique for that probe that explains the emergence of a new conception of the novel. The most important protagonist of the new novel was of course, Virginia Woolf.

The Novelist must "Expose himself to Life and yet be Detached from it"

Virginia Woolf believed that the novelist must "expose himself to life and yet be detached from it" (*Granite and Rainbow*). Using a vivid image of Ernest Hemingway, she remarks that "the true writer stands close up to the bull and lets the horns—call them life, truth, reality, whatever you like—pass him close each time" (*Granite and Rainbow*). Life, as she describes it in *A Writer's Diary* is "for us in our generation so tragic—no newspaper placard without its shriek or agony from someone...Unhappiness is everywhere ; just beyond the door ; or stupidity, which is worse." Yet it has the moments of happiness, which would be more frequent if "it weren't

for my feeling that it's a strip of pavement over an abyss". "The Russian point of view," of which Virginia Woolf was very much aware—her essay with this title is in *The Common Reader* (*First Series*)—deepened her sense both of the comedy and tragedy of life, but it was supremely embodied in the novels of Tolstoy, whom she saw as a kind of Sir Thomas Browne creating nineteenth century Slavonic Hamlets who were perpetually asking themselves the question 'Why Live' ? Modestly realizing her limitations, it was with the less massive genius, Chekhov with whom she tended to sympathise. His art had that economy which she also found in the novels of Jane Austen, who was, in this respect, she thought, superior to George Eliot herself.

Fiction, for Virginia Woolf, was not a 'criticism of life' in any Arnoldian sense, but rather a re-creation of the complexities of experience. Just as life was a most subtle and complicated succession of experience, so fiction must be infinitely and supple in order to catch the 'tones', the light and shade of experience. The art of the novelist was similar to that of the painter, and painting for Virginia Woolf did not mean the Dutch School, who were admired by George Eliot, but Roger Fry and the post Impressionist.

Virginia Woolf seeks to confront the reader with the direct mental experience of the characters. As a distinct departure from the conventional novels, unrolling themselves in majestic leisure, with the author constantly telling the story omniscient to the extent of knowing everything about the characters, she is bent on effacing herself. The removal of the writer from the scene necessitated a significant shift in narrative ; it created the need to use the memory of the characters in place of the reader's in a relationship with their past.

No Plot, but flowing Stream of Consciousness

There was no story, no plot. In addition, this kind of novel seemed to turn the reader into an author. Ultimately it is he who puts the story together ; he has accumulated all the data. It was for achieving a full measure of realism that she said that the characters should be left alone to put forth their mind. It was an attempt to document the whole world of the sense in a minute and thorough fashion and to catch fugitive thoughts in their progress through the mind—catch them as Joyce did in *Ulysses*—in their moment of flux. The novelist has to find words that would convey elusive and evanescent thought. He has to express, moreover the images of the inner world of fantasy, fusing with sounds and smell, the world of perceptual experience. This attempt is significantly different from, what for instance Dostoevsky did, or from what Shakespeare's soliloquies import. In the former, there is more of a narrator's report than the flowing stream of consciousness. And Shakespeare's soliloquies are organised monologues in which the mind presents reasoned and ordered thought. Even in the mad speeches of Lear there is 'reason in madness.'

A Critique

This theory of fiction is remarkable inasmuch as it lays stress on the inner reality of the character—it tries to catch the mind in flux. Virginia Woolf claims that she is more realistic, and her fiction is not a distortion of the working of her characters' mind, but one may ask if this inner reality is not at the cost of all outward reality. How far is it realistic for a character to be obsessed with oneself to the exclusion of the vital problems that plague the society around ? Why not write a more objective fiction in which the protagonist or the novelist serves the useful function of the catalyst bringing the reader and the reality face to face with each other, reality being not the reality of a rarified creature of upper middle class society, but the hard grim life which common man has to go through ?

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Mrs. Virginia Woolf as an Aesthete

Virginia Woolf : A Satisfying Aesthete

David Cecil says about Virginia Woolf that "she is by far the most satisfying aesthete. She is not the first. It is even possible that literary historians of the future will see her primarily as the culmination of the nineties, and that movement of which Walter Peter was the high priest in England. Certainly there is a great deal in common between him and her. Like her, Peter regarded life as a succession of contemplative moments to be filled with as rich a content as possible ; like her he directed our eyes to look first and everywhere for what stimulates the sense of beauty. But Peter practised less well than he preached. Whatever his principles may have been, in fact he looked for aesthetic satisfaction only in a very limited area of experience ; the beautiful for him was mostly to be found in museums. Not so Virginia Woolf. She could find it as much in a scrap of orange peel lying in the gutter as in the Venus de Milo ; as easily walking down the Euston Road as within the consecrated portals of the National Gallery. There is nothing languid or academic about her aestheticism. Casual and zestful, it is the expression of an intense vitality, at home in the bustle and clamour of the modern age, inspired by no fatigued desire to escape from a present, that is too much for her, into the safe calm of a dead past. As presented by her, the aesthetic life is vigorous and satisfying as any other kind of life. And for us too, while we are reading her books ; as long as their spell is on us we do not bother about the limitations of her vision. Indeed these limitations are seen to be a necessary condition of her success. In order to concentrate our eyes on the aesthetic aspects of experience, she has to exclude its other aspects. And they seem more beautiful for being thus isolated. Her coldness and her detachment from the hot earth add to her vision a sea-fresh purity ; 'a pearly gleam which set the spirit astir with a sort of delicate exhilaration. What a relief for once in a way, freed from the claims of heart and conscience, to concentrate on the mere spectacle of a world so brimful of strangeness and fascination and delight.' How cleansing to be transported, if only for an hour, to a region where it is more important to be clever than to be good, and more important to be beautiful than to be either.

Communication of Sense of Reality

The main aim of Virginia Woolf was the communication of sense of reality through fiction, though her conception of reality differed from that of Arnold Bennet and John Galsworthy. She was persuaded that reality is a flux and in order to convey it effectively the novelist must abandon the external world in favour of the world of internal complexity and consciousness. This sense of reality was communicated by Virginia Woolf with such a dexterity that even Dorothy Richardson—who may be said to have initiated this method in English literature—lagged behind. Mrs. Woolf brought to her work highly individualized gifts—hypersensitiveness on the sensory side, refined observation of the processes of thought and feeling, and a deep and tender response to the pathetic evanescence of the reality that she devoted herself to adumberating through her fiction.

Accepts the Beauty of Life, the Myriad Impressions

Aestheticism means pursuit of beauty through the medium of art. In this pursuit no mundane or external motives are satisfied. The pursuit of art becomes an end in itself. Peter expresses the very essence of this artistic creed when he says, "To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and end are identified to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance of art and poetry." Mrs. Virginia Woolf also thinks novel to be a means to the lofty end. It aims at exploration of the soul. "Had she not followed Peter and the spiritualists, she might have been remembered for a little while as an elegant blue-stocking interested in Greek philosophy and the Elizabethans, with a taste for music and pictures, with correct judgement and exacting standards, and a slightly snobbish distaste for the common herd." She is aware of the super-refined in herself, and is not in the least ashamed of it. Hers is a temperament almost painfully alive to the feeling of life—the excitement aroused in her by the process of living and the perception of objects, her intensity of response to the stimuli of sights and sounds and the spectacle of persons living their humdrum busy lives, full of little thoughts as if there were no universe around them and no death at the end. The world of her receptions was so crowded, so filled with impressions crying out for expressions that the strain of it on her receptive temperament would surely have been unbearable had she not found some form of artistic release. She looked around the materialists and naturalists and rejected them. She wanted to accept only the ultimate beauty of life, that is, the beauty of spirit. Life appeared to her as a mass of myriad impressions, all beautifully and spiritually collected.

"Not only she illuminates our appreciation of what we already think beautiful, she opens our eyes to the new sources 'of delight.' Far more successfully than any contemporary she has disengaged the aesthetic quality in the modern sense. She always combines beauty with accuracy, and gets the effects not by idealising and decorating it, but simply by isolating and indicating those aspects of her subject that appeal to the aesthetic sense."

The Context

Thus Virginia Woolf may be seen in the context of the aesthetic movement that flourished in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This movement is a departure from the early and the best Victorian literature inasmuch as the artist now concentrates more on the form than addressing himself to the social problems. Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Arnold had dealt with the problems of society at a scale and with a perfection which were extremely difficult for their successors to surpass. No great heights could be scaled. Hence they turned to the perfection of the form and increasingly experimented with newer and richer forms. Virginia Woolf is outstanding because she imitates none. Her form is authentically her own.

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Persons and Places in To the Lighthouse

(A) PERSONS

(1)	Mr. Ramsay	: The head of the Ramsay family ; the second most important character of the novel.
(2)	Mrs. Ramsay	: The central figure in the novel.
(3)	Lily Briscoe	: A complex figure ; a painter.
(4)	Charles Tansley	: A student of Mr. Ramsay.
(5)	Mr. Carmichael	: A poet.
(6)	William Bankes	: Another guest at Ramsay house-hold.
(7)	James Ramsay	: The youngest of Mrs. Ramsay's eight children.
(8)	Andrew Ramsay	: Mrs. Ramsay's son killed in the war.
(9)	Prue Ramsay	: Mrs. Ramsay's daughter ; dies of childbirth.
(10)	Cam Ramsay	: Mrs. Ramsay's daughter.
(11)	Mildred	: Mrs. Ramsay's maid-servant.

(12) Mrs. M'cNab	:	An old maid-servant in the summer-house.
(13) Mrs. Bast	:	Mrs. M'cNab's helper.
(14) George	:	Mrs. Bast's son.
(15) Mrs. Beckwith	:	Stays at the summer-house.
(16) Macalister	:	An old sailor in the boat.
(17) Jesper	:	A servant of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.
(18) Minta Doyle	:	In love with Paul Rayleys.
(19) Paul Rayleys	:	Loves and later on marries Minta.

(B) PLACES

(1) London	:	Referred to in the background.
(2) Isle of Skye	:	An island where the Lighthouse is situated.

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To the Lighthouse : Introduction

Three-fold Division

"What's the meaning of life ?" Lily Briscoe wonders as she contemplates her unfinished painting on its easel. This is the question to which Virginia Woolf had addressed herself in *Mrs. Dalloway* with perhaps inconclusive results. In *To the Lighthouse* she returns to it with a singlemindedness of approach which controls rigidly the nebulous, filmy texture of existence.

The segment of life which Mrs. Woolf selects for fictional analysis is no raw sample. Severely delimited and brought into sharp focus, its events are highly organized into an obvious artistic pattern. The novel has a three-part division. In the first section, "The Window," a trip to the nearby lighthouse is planned by Mrs. Ramsay for her young son James in spite of the practical admonitions of other grownups—notably of Mr. Ramsay—that the weather will not permit the excursion. The journey is not made. The short interlude called "Time Passes," which makes up part two, describes the passage of time during which the actors of the piece grow older and the house on the seashore ages, free from the habitation of its owners. Mrs. Ramsay dies, two of her children lose their lives, and time holds sway. The long final section sees the trip to the lighthouse successfully undertaken many years later by Mr. Ramsay and two of his children, and the pattern of life completed on canvas by Lily Briscoe, who, as artist and creator, is the rightful heir to Mrs. Ramsay. As the book ends, she can say, with the reader, "I have had my vision".

The Lighthouse Symbol

From the abortive early attempt to the final disembarkation at the lighthouse, the stark tower with its bright shafts of light is the dominant symbol—punctuating the darkness, offering security to seafarers, dreams of mystery to children, and the certainty of its recurring rhythms to all who exist in time. But the meaning of this central symbol, isolated and immutable in a sea of flux, eludes full comprehension. That it has something to do with Mrs. Ramsay is clear from the start :

> "Often she found herself sitting and looking, until she became the thing she looked at—that light, for example. And it would lift up on it some little phrase or other which had been lying in her mind...
>
> She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light. It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things ; trees, streams, flowers, felt they expressed one ; felt they became one ; felt they knew one, in a sense were one..."

David Daiches calls it "a symbol of the individual who is at once a unique and a part of the flux of history. To reach the lighthouse is, in a sense, to make contact with a truth outside oneself, to surrender the uniqueness of one's ego to an impersonal reality." Only when the lighthouse is reached, he points out, do personal grudges disappear, compassion and understanding emerge, and egotism gives way to impersonality.

Mrs. Ramsay

In Mrs. Ramsay, Virginia Woolf has created another Clarissa Dalloway—though with a difference. Beautiful, absolute mistress of her domestic environment, a symbol of motherhood surrounded by her eight children, this woman dominates every character in the novel. Like her earlier counterpart, Mrs. Ramsay is less concerned with intellect than with intuition : "She did in her heart infinitely prefer bodies to clever men who wrote dissertations." She herself reads little. Like Clarissa, her aim in life is to gather people together ("She asked too many people to stay"), to marry them off (she exults in arranging the marriage of Minta to Paul Rayleys, and she tries to pair William Bankes with Lily Briscoe). Even her main hobby, knitting, allows her to create, to join threads, and to form a pattern with skilful fingers, while her mind roams free. Nor does her influence end with her death. As though to die is simply to enter a new phase of flux, Mrs. Ramsay, killed off meaninglessly in a parenthetical sentence, is vividly alive in the minds of her husband and of Lily Briscoe. Like Mrs. Wilcox of *Howards End*, her spirit is the controlling factor in the last section of the novel.

Lily Briscoe

It is Lily, however, acting for the authoress herself, who takes up the reins on earth for Mrs. Ramsay, as Margaret Schlegel does for Ruth Wilcox. Lily's canvas is Mrs. Woolf's view of reality, and Lily's final vision on the last page of the book is *To the Lighthouse* itself. Lily's canvas is the embodiment of Mrs. Woolf's wish to make "Life stand still here," to "make of the moment something permanent." If life is flux, then the capturing and fixing of reality—its shape and texture—is for the artist the supreme activity and, even for Mrs. Ramsay, utterly desirable. Thinking of her dead hostess, Lily muses :

"In the midst of chaos there was shape ; this eternal passing and flowing

...was stuck into stability. Life stands still here, Mrs. Ramsay said. "Mrs. Ramsay ! Mrs. Ramsay !" She repeated. She owned it all to her."

A Study of Human Relationships

To the Lighthouse is also a study of human relationships. As Mrs. Dalloway seeks in party-giving a link with the stream of life, so Mrs. Ramsay gathers a party of house-guests whose inter-relationships with her family and with one another help to suggest, if not to define, the meaning of life. Forster's problem of how to "connect" is Mrs. Woolf's as well.

"Sitting on the floor with her (Lily's) arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs. Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure, she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers ? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored ? Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain ? or the heart ? Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one ? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee."

But in Mrs. Woolf the connection is not political or social or economic or even familial. The problem for her is to separate the human being from the sea of flux—to capture the essence of individuality in an intuitive moment. This is hardest of all, for what she asks by implication is that essence. The senses are not always reliable in ferreting it out : to one's eyes on a certain day, the image of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay watching their child at play is nothing more than that ; at another moment, the image, fraught with significance, becomes deeply symbolic. Lily Briscoe's ears hear arrogance in the harsh accents of Charles Tansley's voice while in reality he shrinks inwardly with an acute inferiority complex.

Nor will intellectual attainments fit one for the task of extracting the essence of human experience. Mr. Ramsay, whose name counts in the history of contemporary philosophy, may frighten his children, but he becomes himself a child before his wife's intuitive knowledge of his psychic needs. The scholarly chats in which he and Charles Tansley engage are tolerated by Mrs. Ramsay because she has the

wisdom to see that they are merely a species of baby talk when measured against the sum total of meaningful experience.

Balance Through Impersonality

Mrs. Woolf allows the remnants of the Ramsay clan to reach the lighthouse only after travail, war, death, and an accumulation of human wisdom—rather than at the start of the book—to show that such experience is necessary to the attainment of the balance that comes with impersonality. This is the reason, perhaps, that Mrs. Woolf associates Mrs. Ramsay so frequently with the lonely tower. The cynosure of all eyes, a welcome sight to all travellers in flux, both Mrs. Ramsay and her lighthouse are generally distant and unapproachable. They give direction to the human beings who steer by their light (Paul Rayleys watches Mrs. Ramsay's eyes for signs of approval in his wooing of Minta Doyle, though Mrs. Ramsay has never spoken to him about her interest in the match). Even her husband, though, he can find repose in her motherly sympathy, is far from understanding his wife in life. Only after many years of suffering and maturing can sullen James Ramsay, who has harboured violent Oedipal thoughts of murdering his father, find release from personal antagonism as he and his chastened father tie up at the lighthouse. In bringing the quest for self-knowledge to a successful culmination when the tower is reached, the author points symbolically to Mrs. Ramsay as the principle of impersonal involvement—as strong a force in death as in life.

Mrs. Woolf deals with life and death in and out of time even more imaginatively than in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the twenty-five page interlude entitled "Time Passes," normal, traditional relationships of human beings to nature in fiction are reversed. The fate of the protagonists is subordinated in narration to the vagaries of climate and the passage of time. Thus :

> "The nights now are full of wind and destruction ; the trees plunge and bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths. Also the sea tosses itself and breaks itself, and should any sleeper fancying that he might find on the beach an answer to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude, throw off his bedclothes and go down by himself to walk on the sand, no image with semblance of serving and divine promptitude comes readily to hand bringing the night to order and making the world reflect the compass of the soul. The hand dwindles in his hand ; the voice bellows in his ear. Almost it would appear that it is useless in such confusion to ask the night those questions as to what, and why, and wherefore, which tempt the sleeper from his bed to seek an answer.

[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly

the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty)" And :

> "Moreover, softened and acquiescent, the spring with her bees humming and gnats dancing threw her cloak about her, veiled her eyes, averted her head, and among passing shadows and flights of small rain seemed to have taken upon her a knowledge of the sorrows of mankind.
>
> (Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which indeed a tragedy, people said, everything, they said, had promised so well).
>
> And now in the heat of summer the wind sent its spies about the house again......"

As it does in actuality but in very few fictional representations of reality, the sweep of flux is allowed to dominate the discrete individual segments of human experience which occasionally impinge.

Space, too, is carefully delineated by the author. Deliberately, she avoids specific identification (except to set the scene in the Hebrides) so that the bare rocks, the water, and the lighthouse may share the classical symbolic associations of Anywhere. The body of water which leads to the lighthouse—being the sea of flux, the river of consciousness—must be nameless, for it is life itself.

Characters as Types

The cast of characters, too, though identified as individuals, are discernible as types. Old Mr. Carmichael, useless to his wife, dependent on charity for simple pleasures like tobacco, ostensibly lazy and unproductive, surprises everyone by succeeding at lyric poetry. Mr. Bankes, the scientific mind in action preferring solitary perfection to immersion in the stream of human involvement, refuses Mrs. Ramsay's silent offer of marriage to Lily Briscoe. (That his name is Bankes may be meaningful in the sense that he rejects the offer to immerse in life). Nor can the name Lily, conferred on the spinsterish artist who acts as surrogate for the late Mrs. Ramsay, be ignored as indicating the pure beauty, the flowering whiteness appropriate to weddings and funerals. In Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay finally, Mrs. Woolf weds intellect and intuition, but shows clearly that there is no real equality in the match. Whatever the world may think, it is Mrs. Ramsay's intuition that controls the union. After her death, her husband's rudderless intellect blunders tellingly ; he is reunited with her spirit in the arriva[illegible]e lighthouse.

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Synopsis of To the Lighthouse

The Ramsay Family

Mrs. Ramsay promised her seven year old son that if the next day were fair he would be taken on a visit to the lighthouse. This lighthouse was visible from the window of their summer house on the Isle of Skye. James, the youngest of Mrs. Ramsay's eight children, was his mother's favourite. The father of the family was a professor of philosophy whose students often thought that he was inspiring and was one of the foremost metaphysicians of the early twentieth century, but his own children, particularly James, did not like him, because they thought that he made sarcastic remarks.

Several guests were visiting the Ramsays. There was young Mr. Tansley, Mr. Ramsay's student, who was also unpopular with the children because he seemed to delight in their discomfiture. Tansley was mildly in love with his hostess, despite her fifty five years and eight children. There was Lily Briscoe who was painting a picture of the cottage with Mrs. Ramsay and James seated before it. There was Mr. Carmichael, a never-do-well who amused the Ramsay youngsters because he had a white beard and a moustache tinged with yellow. There was also Mr. Bankes, a young man in love with Prue, the prettiest of Ramsay daughters.

The Charitable Mrs. Ramsay

The afternoon went by slowly. Mrs. Ramsay went to the village to call on an old woman. She spent several hours knitting stockings for the lighthouse keeper's child, whom she and her children were planning to visit. Many people wondered how the Ramsays, particularly the wife, managed to be so hospitable and so charitable in spite of the fact they were not rich. Mr. Ramsay could not possibly make a fortune by expounding Locke, Berkeley, and Hume to students, or by publishing books on metaphysics.

The Dinner Party

Mr. Carmichael pr[illegible]ling to read, had actually fallen asleep early after lunch. The children, except James, who was busy cutting pictures from a catalogue, had busied themselves in playing

cricket. Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley had passed the time in pointless conversation. Miss Lily had made only a daub or two on the canvas. For some reason, the lines of the scene refused to come clear in her painting. Prue and Mr. Bankes had gone walking along the shore.

Even the dinner went by slowly. The only occasion of interest to the children, which was one of tension to the mother, was when Mr. Carmichael asked for a second bowl of soup, thereby angering his host, who liked the meals to be dispatched promptly. As soon as the children had finished, their mother sent the younger ones to bed. Mrs. Ramsay hoped that Prue will not fall in love with Bankes, and Lily, who always became seasick, would not like to accompany them in the small sailboat if they should go to the lighthouse the following morning. She also thought of the fifty pounds needed to make repairs on the house.

The Trip to the Lighthouse Cancelled

After dinner, Mrs. Ramsay went upstairs to the nursery. James had a boar's skull which his sister detested. Whenever Cam tried to remove it from the wall and from his sight, he fell into a frenzy of screaming. Mrs. Ramsay wrapped the skull in a handkerchief. Afterwards she went downstairs and joined her husband in the library ; they sat throughout the evening. She went on knitting and he reading. Before they went to bed, it was agreed that the trip for the next day would have to be cancelled. The night had turned stormy.

The Summer House

Night followed night. The trip to the lighthouse was never made that summer, nor did the Ramsays return to the summer house for some years. In the meantime, Mrs. Ramsay died quietly in her sleep. Prue was married although not to Mr. Bankes, and died in child birth. The first World War began. Andrew Ramsay enlisted, and was sent to France, where he was killed by an exploding shell.

Time passed. The wall paper in the summer house came loose from the walls. Books mildewed. In the kitchen, a cup was occasionally knocked down and broken by old Mrs. Mc'Nab, who came to look after the house from time to time. In the garden, the roses and the annual flowers grew wild, and died.

Mr. Carmichael brought out a volume of poems during the war. About the time his book appeared, daffodils and violets bloomed in the Isle of Skye. Mrs. Mc'Nab looked longingly at a warm cloak left in a closet. She wished the cloak belonged to her.

At last the war ended. Mrs. Mc'Nab received a telegram requesting that the house be put in order. The house keeper, aided by two cleaning women, worked for several days, and when the Ramsays arrived, the cottage was in order once more. Several

visitors came again to spend a summer at the cottage. Lily Briscoe returned for a quiet vocation. Mr. Carmichael, the successful poet, also arrived.

One morning Lily Briscoe came down for breakfast and wondered at the quiet that greeted her. No one had been down ahead of her, although she had expected that Mr. Ramsay and the two younger children, James and Cam, would have departed for the long postponed sail to the lighthouse, to which the youngsters had been looking forward with joyful expectation. Within a few minutes, the three straggled down, all having slept past the time they had intended to arise. After a swift breakfast, they disappeared towards the shore. Their going was watched by Lily Briscoe who had set up her canvas once again with the intention of trying to paint the picture of the cottage.

The Journey to the Lighthouse

The journey to the island, where the lighthouse stood was not as pleasant as the children had expected. They had never really liked their father, he had taken too little time to understand them. He was short and sharp when they did things which looked foolish to him, though their actions were perfectly comprehensible to the son and the daughter. James especially expected to be blamed caustically and pointlessly if the crossing were slow or not satisfactory in some other way for he had been delegated to handle the sheets and the tiller of the boat.

Mr. Ramsay strode down to the beach with his offsprings, each carrying a paper parcel to take to the keeper of the lighthouse. They set sail and pointed the prow of the sailboat to the black and white striped pillar of the lighthouse in the hazy distance. Mr. Ramsay sat in the middle of the boat alongwith an old fisherman and his son. They were to take over the boat in an emergency, for Mr. Ramsay had little faith in James as a reliable seaman. In the stern, sat James himself, never tingling, lest his father should look up from the book and indulge in unnecessary and hateful criticism. But his nervous tension was needless, for within a few hours, the little party reached the lighthouse, and wonderful to relate, Mr. Ramsay sprang ashore like a youngster, smiled back at his children, and praised his son for his seamanship.

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Outline Story of To the Lighthouse

PART I

THE WINDOW

Chapter 1

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, alongwith their eight children and six guests, were spending a summer in their summer house in the Island of Skye. James, the youngest of the children, had looked forward to making a trip to the lighthouse which was visible from the Isle of Skye. His mother, Mrs. Ramsay, had promised that if the following day was fine, he would be taken on a visit to the lighthouse. This pleased the seven year old James, who was sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores.

James was cut to the quick when his father who was strolling on the terrace nearby declared that the weather would not be fine the next day. He was so much angered that had there been an axe handy, or poker or any other weapon, James would have seized it and killed his father. The children, particularly James, did not like their father, for he made sarcastic remarks. He had some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement.

Mrs. Ramsay, who was knitting a pair of stocking for the little oy of the lighthouse-keeper, did not like these remarks of her usband and said that she expected the weather to be fine. She was lled with pity both for the lighthouse keeper and her son.

Mr. Ramsay was supported in his opinion about the weather by his student, Mr. Tansley. He said that the wind was blowing from the wrong direction. James and other children disliked him too, because he was in the habit of saying disagreeable things. Mrs. Ramsay was also annoyed with Tansley for his uncalled for opinion about the weather, and wished that he and her husband both left her and her children alone.

After the meals when her children had gone to their bedrooms, Mrs. Ramsay asked Mr. Tansley if he could go with her to the town

where she had some work. Mr. Tansley agreed. As they were going to the town, they met Mr. Carmichael ; Mrs. Ramsay asked him if he wanted something from the town. He said, he wanted nothing. Mrs. Ramsay said, that Mr. Carmichael should have been a philosopher, but he had an affair with some girl, made an unfortunate early marriage, went to India, translated some poetry, wanted to teach Persian or Hindustanee ; but all this came to nothing. Mr. Tansley felt flattered, when Mrs. Ramsay told him this about Mr. Carmichael. He would have liked to pay the fare, if they had hired a cab, or he would like to carry her little bag. Presently Mrs. Ramsay sees advertisement of a circus, and expresses a wish to visit it. But Mr. Tansley could not afford to visit Circus, as his father was a workingman with a large family to support. As he talked, Mrs. Ramsay felt bored, she could see that going to the circus had knocked him off his perch. By talking of workingmen and of helping his own class, he had recovered his self-confidence ; and now she liked him warmly. In fact, she was mildly in love with him in spite of age and a large number of children.

On their way back home she felt that Tansley considered her to be the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, her years and children notwithstanding.

Chapters 2 to 4

As Mrs. Ramsay sat consoling her son James, she found her husband pacing up and down the terrace and singing something ; she also saw Lily Briscoe at her painting.

As Lily painted, Mr. Bankes, who was in love with Prue, came up to her. But they were seen by Mr. Ramsay and this made them uncomfortable. To avoid the embarrassment, Mr. Bankes suggests taking a stroll. She would go with him, but it was with great difficulty that she took her eyes off her picture. She had made only a daub or two on the canvas. For some reason, the lines of the scene would not come clear in her painting ; beneath the colours, there was the shape, but when she took the brush in her hand, the thing changed.

They strolled down the garden. It was mid-September and past six in the evening. They both smiled and felt a common hilarity, but were soon overcome by some sadness. Mr. Bankes started commenting on Mr. Ramsay and his affairs. He wondered how the Ramsays, who were not very rich, could afford to be so hospitable. Mr. Ramsay could not have made much money from his books on philosophy.

Chapters 5 to 7

As Mrs. Ramsay was working on her stockings, an idea struck her mind—William Bankes and Lily should marry. She smiled.

Then she asked James to stand up to enable her to measure the length of the stocking. Then her stream of thought went towards the dilapidated condition of the room, the shabby furniture, her dying father, etc.

Mrs. Ramsay once again tells her husband that she was getting the stocking ready for the lighthouse keeper's son. On this Mr. Ramsay snapped out forcefully and said that there was not the slightest chance of their going to the lighthouse the next day. She said that the wind might change and they might be able to go. This enraged her husband ; he was angry that his wife was trying to lose sight of the reality and make their children hope for what was impossible. He thought that she told lies. Mrs. Ramsay, however, did not pursue the matter any further and bent her head in silence. In fact, she respected her husband. He too was a little repentant and started moving up and down the terrace. He then went to his room and devoted himself to the solution of the problem that then engaged him. His mind was splendid ; very few people in the whole of England had the range and subtlety of his mind.

However, he needs somebody to sympathise with him, somebody to tell his story. And he needs whisky. He would like to do homage to the beauty of the world. In spite of their wish to the contrary, Mr. Ramsay stood near his wife and son. He wanted sympathy. As Mrs. Ramsay sat with her needle-work, he said that he was a failure. He wanted to be assured by his wife that he was a genius, that he was needed all over the world. Mrs. Ramsay asked him to be at ease. Filled with her words, looking at her with gratitude, he said he would watch the children play cricket and went away.

Just then, Mr. Carmichael shuffled past.

Chapters 8 and 9

Mrs. Ramsay asked Carmichael if he was going indoors. He made no reply. He took opium. The children said that he had stained his beard yellow with it. He was an unhappy man ; it was his wife's doing. She had turned him out of the house because he was unclean and had tiresomeness of an old man with nothing to do in the world. He had to ask for money to buy tobacco. But Mrs. Ramsay could do no more for him. There was a sunny room given to him, the children liked him, and she went out of the way to be friendly to him. But soon her husband came and stopped by her. But he did not speak. Instead he lost himself in speculating whether the world would have been any different if Shakespeare had not existed, or if the progress of civilization depended upon great men, etc.

He was well-versed in the philosophy of Locke, Hume and Berkeley and was an authority on the French Revolution. But he had not been able to achieve in life what he would have liked to a chieve ; he would rather hide his true feelings. For this concealment, he would appear distasteful to Lily and Mr. Bankes. He was venerable and laughable at one and the same time.

As he walked away Mr. Bankes said that it was a great pity that Mr. Ramsay could not behave like normal people. Lily saw him gaze at Mrs. Ramsay and feel very happy. The happiness was because of love. Could Mr. Bankes, asked Lily, explain the rapture that Mr. Ramsay felt when he saw his wife reading to James. Lily was an unmarried woman, and an unmarried woman, she thought, missed the best of life.

Lily was not getting her picture right. She could not bring on the canvas what she thought she had wanted to paint. So she took the canvas lightly off the easel.

Chapters 10 to 13

Cam was going past them. When Mrs. Ramsay called her, she stopped. Minta Doyle was used to going on after-lunch walks with Paul Rayleys, and Mrs. Ramsay thought that she would marry that good fellow.

Mrs. Ramsay did not want James or Cam to grow older. She thought the loss of childhood was irreparable. However, she wanted people to marry and have children.

Mr. Ramsay and his wife did not want Prue to marry Tansley. Mr. Ramsay said that he would be off for a day's walk, if the weather permitted. It annoyed him that she did not protest. But she knew that it would not be possible for her husband to walk all day long as he was too old to walk so much. Then he seized her hand and kissed it with an intensity that brought tears into her eyes. She thought with delight how strong he was, and how untamed and optimistic. Lily Briscoe was strolling with William Bankes. Mrs. Ramsay thought that it meant that they would marry.

Chapters 14 to 16

Minta and Paul had gone out for a walk. Nancy and Andrew had also gone with them. Andrew observed that Minta wore more sensible clothes than most people. As they were coming back from the walk, Minta cried that she had lost her grandmother's brooch. They all went back to search for the brooch. But in vain. Paul told Minta that he would come back the next morning and resume the search. But Minta said that it was all useless. Paul thought that if he did not find the brooch, he would go to Edinburgh and buy her a new one ; he would prove what he could do. At last they came back to Ramsay house-hold. People were getting ready for dinner. Prue was heard teliing her mother that Nancy had gone out with Paul and Minta.

The fact that Nancy was with them, felt Mrs. Ramsay, made it less likely that anything happened to Paul and Minta.

Jesper and Rose said to Mrs. Ramsay that Mildred wanted to know whether they would take some more time to come for dinner. Mrs. Ramsay replied in the negative. When fifteen people are sitting down to dinner, one cannot keep things waiting for ever.

Then came the choosing of necklace for the dinner. This was a ceremony gone through every evening. And as in so many other things, this made Mrs. Ramsay sad. Rose offered her the necklace to wear.

Paul and Minta had come back ; she felt annoyed with them for being late. She went down and crossed the hall ; she was conscious of the fact that the people gathered there might pay tribute to her beauty. Then there was a call to everybody to assemble for the dinner.

Chapter 17

Mrs. Ramsay sat at the head of the table like a queen. At the far end sat her husband frowning ; she did not know what he was frowning at. She forebode to look at Mrs. Tansley. Nothing seemed to have merged, they all sat separate. She asked Bankes—for whose loneliness she had lot of pity—if he had found his letters. William Bankes said that one seldom got anything worthwhile by post, yet one always wanted letters. Charles Tansley thought that they talked rot. Mrs. Ramsay asked Tansley if he wrote many letters. But he was not to be drawn into this kind of a small talk.

He said to Mrs. Ramsay that there was no going to the lighthouse the next morning. Lily thought that he was the most uncharming human being she had ever met. She was once again lost in her painting. She thought of laughing out at Tansley. She asked him to take her to the lighthouse. He knew that she was making fun of him. Everybody else, including Prue, also despised him. He turned towards the window and said very rudely that it would be too rough for her to go to the lighthouse. He felt annoyed that Lily should have made him speak like this before Mrs. Ramsay.

He thought of such a dinner a terrible waste of time. If he had been alone he would have been at work by now instead of wasting time over these triflings. The truth was that he could not enjoy family life. He wanted to assert himself. He considered the people assembled there as small fries compared to himself.

However, Lily Briscoe asked him again if he would take her to the lighthouse. This time she made this request in a friendly manner, and Tansley understood the change in the mood and became communicative. He was relieved of his egotism, and told her how he was once thrown out of a boat when he was a baby and how he had learnt to swim. He talked of his uncle having kept a lighthouse. This caught everybody's attention.

Amidst all this, Lily thinks of her painting again and resolves to resume her work the next morning. Men were talking of wages and unemployment.

Minta and Paul now came in, and hurriedly found their way to different ends of the table. Minta told them that she had lost

her brooch. This aroused Mr. Ramsay's chivalry. In the beginning Minta was afraid of Mr. Ramsay, but later, she got on perfectly well. She sat by him smiling.

Seeing her smiling, Mrs. Ramsay thought that Paul and Minta must have been engaged, and for once she felt what she never had felt —jealousy, because she was growing old. Paul told them that "we" had gone back to search the brooch. This strengthened Mrs. Ramsay's suspicion for it was the first time that he had used the word "we."

Mr. Bankes admired a dish, which Mrs. Ramsay offered him with great care. All his love, all his reverence had returned.

Mrs. Ramsay thought that William Bankes must marry Lily ; they had so many things in common. There was something in Lily which Mrs. Ramsay liked, but, she feared, no man would marry her unless it was a much older man like Bankes. He seemed to care for her since his wife's death. But it was not love. Mrs. Ramsay must arrange for them to take long walks together. Everything seemed possible. Then again Mrs. Ramsay thought of her husband.

The dinner was over. It was an uneventful affair after all. It was time to go. She suddenly thought that she liked Charles Tansley ; she liked even his awkwardness. Her husband was telling stories and she was waiting for them to finish.

Chapters 18 and 19

After the dinner was over, all went their different ways. Mrs. Ramsay felt flattered. The children were not asleep as yet. It was eleven, and they were still talking about that boar's skull. She had told Mildred to remove it, but she had forgotten. Cam could not go to sleep with the skull in the room and James screamed if she touched it. Mrs. Ramsay wrapped the skull up in her own shawl. She succeeded in lulling Cam to sleep.

Then she went over to James and asked him to sleep. He asked her if they would go to the lighthouse the next day. She replied in the negative. She, however, covered him with her shawl. But he would never forget, she knew, and felt angry with her husband and Tansley.

She hoped that Charles Tansley would not bang his books on the floor upon the children's head, for they were excitable children and did not sleep well. He looked clumsy and she would be relieved when he went. Yet she would have him treated better.

When Paul held a gold-watch in his hand, it appeared that he had been engaged to Minta. He seemed to be saying to Mrs. Ramsay that it was all because of her. She went to the room where her husband was reading. She took up her stockings and started knitting. She knew that her husband did not want to be disturbed.

She also took up a book and started reading quietly. After sometime, when her husband had finished a chapter of the book, she told him that Minta and Paul were engaged. He said that he had already guessed. He asked her if she would not finish the stockings that night. She felt superior and said that she would not.

She felt that as he looked at her, he wanted her to tell him that she loved him. As she stood with stockings in her hands, she knew that he was admiring her beauty. But she could not bring herself to tell him that she loved him.

PART II

TIME PASSES

Chapters 1 to 10

Andrew coming up from the beach said that it was too dark to see. Prue asked Andrew to put out the lights in the hall. Only Carmichael's candle was burning, as he was reading Virgil. When he blew out his candle, it was past midnight.

Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning. Mrs. Ramsay had died suddenly the night before. The arms that he stretched out remained empty, because Mrs. Ramsay had died.

The summer-house was now deserted and empty. There was silence and loneliness. At last Mrs. M'cNab came to the summer-house to open all windows and dust the bed room. She was a caretaker. She was seventy and was bowed down by weariness. Two of her children were base-born and one had deserted her.

Prue Ramsay had been married that May. She looked beautiful. She died that summer of child-birth, which was a tragedy. The First World War came. Andrew Ramsay died in France in a shell explosion.

Mr. Carmichael had brought out a volume of poems which had an unexpected success. The war had revived people's interest in poetry.

Mrs. M'cNab found the summer-house in a shabby condition. Everything was lying at sixes and sevens. The garden was a pitiful sight. The books and things were mouldy. Once the Ramsays had thought of coming to the summer-house, but had put off the visit because of the war and because the journey was so difficult. They had only sent money to Mrs. M'cNab all these years to keep everything neat and clean. Many things had changed during the war. Many people had died. So were Mrs. Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue all dead.

The house was in such a bad condition that it was not possible for Mrs. M'cNab to clean it and set it in order single-handed. So she requisitioned the services of Mrs. Bast to help her clean the house. They got to work, and set the house in order. She got a letter from one of the Ramsay daughters to get the house ready immediately. They were coming for the summer at last. At last, after days of work within, and cutting and digging without, things were set in order.

People started arriving. Lily Briscoe had her bag carried to the house late one evening in September. Mr. Carmichael also came by the same train.

The house was full again. Mrs. Beckwith was staying there. Carmichael read a book by candle light. Lily was fatigued by the journey and immediately went to sleep.

PART III

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Chapter 1

Lily Briscoe was contemplating. She was wondering what it all meant—their coming back to the summer-house after so many years and Mrs. Ramsay being dead.

She got up early in the morning. She knew that the expodition comprising of Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James was going to the lighthouse. They should have gone already, but they had overslept. They were not ready yet. Mr. Ramsay lost his temper and said that there was no use of going so late.

Lily was sitting alone at the breakfast table and watching all that was going on around her and wondering. Everything there seemed strange to her. She had no attachment here. It looked that the link that bound things had been cut.

Suddenly Mr. Ramsay passed by and Lily pretended to drink from an empty cup to avoid him. She heard him say 'alone' and 'perished'. That is what he was. Old Mr. Carmichael came in, took his coffee and went out to sit in the sun. Lily remembered of things ten years ago. She had thought of shifting a tree in the middle in her picture. But she had never finished the picture.

She fetched herself a chair, and got to work. But with Mr. Ramsay bearing down on her, she could do nothing.

The party was to leave for the lighthouse at half past seven. James was now sixteen and Cam seventeen. Lily was now forty-four. She thought she should not have come to the summer-house when Mrs. Ramsay was dead.

Chapter 2

Mr. Ramsay asked Lily if she wanted anything. She said she had everything. There was an aweful pause and they both looked at the sea. He told her that he had a particular reason for wanting to go to the lighthouse. His wife used to send the lighthouse keeper certain things. He said that such expeditions were very painful, but Lily kept mum. He made a pathetic spectacle.

Presently Cam and James appeared on the scene. Even they looked melancholy and serious. Lily felt empty. Her feelings of sympathy for Mr. Ramsay had come too late. Mr. Ramsay had the bearing of a leader of an expedition. He led the way with his firm military tread, carrying brown paper parcels down the path, with his children following him. Mr. Ramsay saluted Lily, as they went.

Chapter 3

So, they were gone. Lily sighed with relief and disappointment. She was now planning to paint. At last, she made her first decisive stroke. So appeared lines on the canvas that enclosed a space. And she was lost in the stream of her consciousness. All was silence ; nobody seemed yet to be stirring in the house. They were sleeping. She went to the end of the lawn to see whether she could see that little company setting sail. The sea was very calm. She imagined in a boat at a distance Mr. Ramsay, with Cam and James, sailing. She watched the boat stir with some deliberation.

Chapter 4

Mr. Ramsay sat in the middle of the boat. James was steering it. Mr. Ramsay was sharp and curt because of their stillness. He would not be content until they were flying along. He had forced the children to come against their will this time. They had to follow him and could not speak to him. They had decided to resist the tyranny together. They sat in silence while he frowned and fidgeted.

The boat at last began to move. Mr. Ramsay was relieved. James would be forced to keep his eye all the time on the sail. For, if he forgot and the sails shivered and the boat slackened, Mr. Ramsay would rebuke him. As Macalister, the old sailor, told them a story about a ship wreck and told them how men struggled for their lives, Mr. Ramsay seemed to relish it all. But the children kept silent. They thought that he went through the rite of going to the light house for his own pleasure and in memory of dead people (his wife), and they hated it all. All their pleasure of the day was spoiled. James even wanted to escape.

They had left the shore behind. Mr. Ramsay felt old and bored. He felt bereft, and called up before his mind's eyes people who sympathised with him. Suddenly he shouted and they

looked at the island again. He teased Cam by asking if she did not know the points of the compass and the North from the South. He showed her where their house was. He scolded her because he could not understand the state of mind of anyone. Then he thought of saying some simple, easy thing to Cam in order to make her smile.

James thought Cam would now give way and he would be left alone to bear the tyranny of his father. She did not know how to answer him about the puppy that he talked about. He demanded care and sympathy even from his daughter, while James asked her to resist him. She said that Jesper would look after the puppy. He asked her what name she would give to the puppy. She was quiet. And Mr. Ramsay decided that he would not bother her if she did not answer.

Mr. Ramsay took his book and began to read.

Chapter 5

Lily Briscoe had not given sympathy to Mr. Ramsay, and this made her uneasy. She thought of painting again. At the same time she seemed to be sitting beside Mr. Ramsay on the beach. She is again reminded of Mrs. Ramsay when they had all gone to the beach ten years before.

Lily thought of Rayleys. Things had not gone well with them after the first year of their marriage. They too had come to the summer-house. Minta was wretched, tired, garish. They were about to quarrel on some point but kept their voice lest they should wake their children—two boys. Lily went on tunneling her way into her picture, into the past. Paul had said to Minta that she had ruined his life. Their love had all gone. He had taken up with some other woman, a serious woman. Minta had described her admiringly. Far from breaking the marriage, the alliance had righted it ; they were excellent friends.

Lily felt happy when she thought she would never marry. She loved William Bankes and his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life.

She wanted to ask Carmichael a number of questions about life, about death, about Mrs. Ramsay, but could not do so. However, she felt that Carmichael heard what she had not been able to say.

Chapters 6 to 10

The Macalister's boy took one of the fish from the sea. The mutilated fish was thrown back into the sea, because he needed only a part.

Lily cried for Mrs. Ramsay, but nothing happened. The pain

increased, but old Carmichael had not heard her.

She saw a brown spot in the middle of the bay ; it was Mr. Ramsay's boat. It was half way across the bay. Lily was wondering where the old man (Mr. Ramsay) was.

Cam thought that those on the shore felt nothing. It was being more distant and more peaceful. The sails sagged and they came to stop, waiting for a breeze. They were miles from the shore and miles from the lighthouse in the hot sun. As the sun grew hotter, they came closer and felt each other's presence. But Mr. Ramsay went on reading. James, however, dreaded the moment when his father would speak sharply to him. James was so angry that he thought that if his father asked him some unreasonable question, he would take a knife and kill him. He called his father a tyrant, and he hated tyranny.

James looked at the lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rock and the tower. He could see windows in it and the washings spread out to dry.

Cam had never seen the island from the sea before this. Now she was telling herself an imaginary story of adventure, of how they once took a boat and escaped from a ship. She wanted the sense of adventure and escape. But then she was happy that she should be alive. She felt that her father was not a tyrant ; he was a wise man. And James was a sarcastic brute when he talked of his father.

Chapters 11 to 13

Lily Briscoe continues with the stream of her consciousness. She thought of Mr. Ramsay, Carmichael, and Tansley. Then suddenly she felt that somebody had come to the drawing room. She saw some white thing in the room. The old horror came back and she cried "Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay." She could imagine Mrs. Ramsay sitting on the chair.

James and others were very close to the lighthouse. One could see it very clearly. A man had come out, looked at them and gone in again.

Cam was tired of looking at the sea. Still both she and James looked at their father. After his long silence, Mr. Ramsay asked them to follow him. He was hungry and it was time for lunch. And, besides, they were right on the lighthouse. Macalister praised James' steering, but James thought his father had never praised him. Mr. Ramsay opened the parcel and shared out the sandwitches. Now, he was happy.

They were sailing very fast. At last Mr. Ramsay took out his watch, made some calculation and said that James had done

well, he had steered them like a born sailor. This is what James had been wanting. His father had praised him and he was happy. At last they reached the lighthouse.

Lily felt that Mr. Ramsay might have reached the lighthouse. She thought that she had at last given Mr. Ramsay whatever she wanted to give him when he left her in the morning.

Old Carmichael stood beside her, reading. He also said that they would have landed on the lighthouse. Both of them were thinking of the same thing. There was no need of speaking.

Quickly she returned to her canvas and completed her picture. Laying down her brush, she said, she had had her vision.

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Chapter-wise Summary of To the Lighthouse

PART I

THE WINDOW

Chapter 1

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, alongwith their eight children and six guests, were spending a summer in the Island of Skye, where they owned a summer house. James, the youngest of the eight children, had looked forward to making a trip to the lighthouse which was visible from the Isle of Skye. The book opens with a promise from his mother that if the following day were fine, he would be taken on a visit to the lighthouse. To the seven year old boy these words conveyed great joy, as if it were settled that the expedition would invariably take place. Only a night's darkness and a day's sail seemed to stand between him and his long cherished desire as he sat on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores. James who was highly excitable was a favourite of his mother.

James was cut to the quick when his father who was strolling on the terrace nearby, declared that the weather would not be fine the next day. He was so much angered that had there been an axe handy, a poker or any weapon that gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him then and there, James would have seized it. Such were the emotions that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts. In fact, the children, particularly James did not like him, for he made sarcastic remarks, and had a strange joy in disillusioning them and pouring ridicule upon his wife who was a thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought). He had some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement. He never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any living mortal. This, the children resented. He wanted them to know that life was difficult, facts uncompromising and the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished and where our frail barks founder in darkness, needs courage, truth and power to endure.

Mrs. Ramsay, who was knitting a pair of stocking for the little boy of the lighthouse keeper, said that she expected the weather to be fine. She was filled with pity both for the lighthouse keeper and his son and wanted to help them as much as she could.

Mr. Ramsay was supported in his opinion about the weather by Mr. Tansley, who was his student and was, then, walking with him up and down the terrace. He said that the wind was blowing from the wrong direction. He too was in the habit of saying disagreeable things. It was odious of him to rub this point in now, it disappointed James all the more. Mrs. Ramsay knew all this but she did not let the children laugh at the atheist. But they disliked him all the same.

Mrs. Ramsay could not bear incivility. Indeed all the men who came in her contact somehow came under her protection. When Tansley said that there would be no landing on the lighthouse the next day, she wished that he and her husband both left her and James alone. Andrew said that Tansley was a sarcastic brute. The children disliked not his face, but his point of view ; he was interested in their discomfiture. He liked walking up and down with Mr. Ramsay talking about things like Latin poetry and mathematics and philosophy. At times, his remarks made Mrs. Ramsay laugh.

Mrs. Ramsay regretted that her children should be so critical at so young an age. They had deep prejudices, difference of opinion and divisions, which she deplored. The existing differences between the rich and poor, high and low were bad enough. She had in her veins the blood of an Italian house, whose daughters scattered about the English drawing-rooms in the nineteenth century, had lisped so charmingly. All her wit and bearing came from them, and not from the sluggish English or the cold Scotch. But she thought over the problem of rich and poor more profoundly.

After the meals when her children had gone to their bedrooms, Mrs. Ramsay asked Mr. Tansley if he could go with her to the town where she had some errand. As they were going, she asked Mr. Carmichael if he wanted something from the town. He said, he wanted nothing. Mr. Ramsay said that Mr. Carmichael should have been a philosopher, but he had an affair with some girl, made an unfortunate early marriage, went to India, translated some poetry, wanted to teach Persian or Hindustanee ; but all this came to nothing and now, as they saw him, he was lying on the lawn. Mr. Tansley felt flattered when Mrs. Ramsay told him this about Mr. Carmichael. He would have liked to pay the fare, if they had taken the cab, or he would like to carry her little bag. He would like her to see him as a fellow or a professor. Presently, she sees advertisement of a circus, and expresses a wish to visit it. Mr. Tansley's father had been a workingman ; they had a large family and could not afford a visit to the circus. As he talked, Mrs. Ramsay felt bored, she could see that going to the circus had knocked him off

his perch. By talking of workingmen and of helping his own class, he had recovered his self-confidence ; and now she liked him warmly. In fact, she was mildly in love with him, inspite of age and the large number of children.

In the town, Tansley stood in the parlour of a small house, while Mrs. Ramsay went upstairs for a moment to see a woman. When she came back, she suddenly realized that Tansley thought her to be the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, her years and children notwithstanding. As they were walking Charles Tansley took her bag ; he felt proud as if he was walking with a beautiful woman for the first time in his life.

Chapters 2 and 3

Mrs. Ramsay sat consoling James, who had been greatly hurt by the caustic remarks of his father and Tansley. Suddenly, she hears something sung out with utmost intensity. It was her husband pacing up and down the terrace. She looked around apprehensively if anybody heard him she was glad that it was only Lily Briscoe. Lily Briscoe stood on the edge of the lawn painting a picture of the cottage with Mrs. Ramsay and James seated before it. Seeing her, Mrs. Ramsay smiled with her chinese eyes and her puckered up face. She thought Lily would never marry. Mrs. Ramsay thought that nobody could take her paintings seriously. But Lily was an independent little creature, and Mrs. Ramsay liked her for that.

Chapter 4

As Lily painted, Mr. Bankes, who was in love with Prue, the prettiest of the Ramsay daughters, came up to her. He had noticed how orderly she was, up before breakfast and off to paint, poor but sensible. Just then Mr. Ramsay glared at them and that made them uncomfortable. This made Mr. Bankes almost immediately say something about its being chilly, and suggest taking a stroll. She would go with him, but it was with difficulty that she took her eyes off her picture. She had made only a daub or two on the canvas. For some reason, the lines of the scene would not come clear in her painting. Beneath the colours, there was the shape, she could see it clearly enough. But when she took the brush in her hand, the thing changed. The passage from conception to the canvas had become dreadful for her. She often felt herself struggling to capture what her mind so clearly conceived. At such moments other things like her own inadequacy, her insignificance and keeping the house for her father had forced themselves upon her, and she had considerable difficulty in restraining herself from falling on Mrs. Ramsay's knees and telling her that she loved her. But that was not true ; she loved everything—the hedges, the house, the children.

She laid her brushes in the box and said to William Bankes that it suddenly got cold. It was mid-September and past six in the evening. So they strolled down the garden in the usual direction.

There they came regularly drawn by some need. It was as if the water floated off and set sailing thoughts which had grown stagnant on dry land, and gave to their bodies even some sort of physical relief. They both smiled standing there and felt a common hilarity; but were soon overcome by some sadness.

Looking at the sand-hill, Mr. Bankes thought of Mr. Ramsay and that incident which brought home to him the sad fact that their friendship had ceased. Now they met only to repeat; there was no newness. He called Ramsay children after the kings and queens of England: Cam the Wicked, James the Ruthless, Andrew the Just, Prue the Fair. He, as everybody else, wondered how the Ramsays, who were not very rich, could afford to be so hospitable. They had a large number of children, who had to be fed and educated. Mr. Ramsay could not have made much money from his books on philosophy. Lily had asked Andrew what his father's books were about. "Subject and object and the nature of reality", Andrew had replied. Mr. Bankes thought that Mr. Ramsay was one of those men who had done their best work before forty. He had made a definite contribution to philosophy in one little book when he was only twenty five.

Chapter 5

Mrs. Ramsay was on her stocking, for they might go to the lighthouse after all. And as she went about her work, she smiled, for an admirable idea had flashed upon her this very moment—William and Lily should marry.

James fidgeted purposely when he was asked by his mother to stand up and serve as the measuring block for the lighthouse keeper's son. As she looked up asking him to stand straight in order to let her measure the length of the stocking, she saw the room and thought that the chairs were very shabby. The house leaked all through the winter, there lived then none except an old woman. So she thought there was no use buying good chairs. The rent of the house was small, the children liked it, it was a welcome change for the husband from his routine. And there was room for visitors, whose work in London was over. She did not get much time to read books. At a certain moment, she said the house would become so shabby that something will have to be done, perhaps they could be taught to wipe their feet and not bring the beach in with them. The mat was fading, the wallpaper was flapping. Every door was left open.

She is reminded of her father, who was dying. He had cancer of the throat, nothing could be done. At home the mountains were beautiful.

The stocking was too short by half an inch even when she made allowance for the fact that the lighthouse keeper's son was thinner than James. She looked very sad. She was most often

silent. She could look back on moments of love and think of times when she was beautiful. But she is now no more aware of beauty than a child, as Mr. Bankes once remarked. He thought there was something incongruous to be worked into the harmony of her face.

Chapter 6

Mrs. Ramsay twitted her husband for having sent away Charles Tansley. Once again when she says that she was getting the stocking ready for the lighthouse keeper's son, Mr. Ramsay snapped out forcefully that there was not the slightest chance of their going to the lighthouse the next day. She said that the wind often changed, and so they might as well be able to go. The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's mind enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered. He was angry that his wife was trying to lose sight of the reality and make their children hope for what was impossible. He thought that she told lies.

Because he crossed her in this matter, she thought that to pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veil of civilization so wantonly and brutely, was so horrible an outrage of human decency that without replying to his curt remarks, dazed and blinded, she bent her head.

In fact, there was nobody whom she respected so much as she respected him. She was quite ready to take his word for it. He too was a little repentant and started moving up and down the terrace. He then went to his room and devoted himself to the solution of a problem that then engaged him. His mind was splendid. Very few people in the whole of England had the range and subtlety of mind that he possessed. He looked at his wife and saw through the window and thought that they needed his protection. But his intellectual pursuits should come first. He had achieved something, not everything. Everything only one in a generation achieves. The question was one of taking the next step on the road to eminence and greatness, and, for this, he braced himself with all his powers of endurance, foresight, devotion and skill. Still, he would imagine people saying that the next step was beyond his powers and that he was a failure.

In the meantime, unwillingly he realized the obvious distinction between two types of men. On the one hand were men of superhuman strength who could go over the whole alphabet. On the other, there were men of genius, the gifted, the inspired, who miraculously lumped all the letters together in one flash. He himself was not a genius, but he might have the strength to repeat the letters from 'A' to 'Z'! Only one in a million achieves total success and the reputation of that man might last for two thousand years. But what are two thousand years compared to the millions that have passed and that will follow. Even a stone would outlast Shakespeare's reputation. So far as he himself was concerned, he will be remembered

for a year or two. But he felt that nobody should blame him for his failure to succeed completely. He needs somebody to sympathise with him, somebody to tell his story to. And he needs whisky. He would like to do homage to the beauty of the world.

Chapter 7

In spite of their wish to the contrary, Mr. Ramsay stood near his wife and son. He wanted sympathy. As Mrs. Ramsay sat with her needlework, he said that he was a failure. He wanted to be assured by his wife that he was a genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, wanted and accepted. He wanted his barrenness to be made fertile and all the rooms of the house made full of life. Mrs. Ramsay said that Tansley considered him the greatest metaphysician of the world. But he must have more than that ; he must be assured that he was needed all over the world.

She asked him to be at ease, go in and out and enjoy himself. She thought that if he put implicit faith in her, nothing would harm him. Filled with her words, looking at her with gratitude, he said he would watch the children play cricket and went away. She had no doubt that the universities and the people wanted him. What discomposed her was his coming to her like this, for he was infinitely superior to her. And then there were other things which diminished their joy. For instance, she could not tell him that (as Mr. Bankes told her) his last book was not quite the best.

Just then, Mr. Carmichael shuffled past.

Chapter 8

She asked Carmichael if he was going indoors. He made no reply. He took opium. The children said that he had stained his beard yellow with it. He was an unhappy man, who came to them every year as an escape, yet every year, she felt the same that he did not trust her. It was his wife's doing. She had turned him out of the house because he was unclean and had the tiresomeness of an old man with nothing to do in the world. He had to ask for money to buy tobacco. But Mrs. Ramsay could do no more for him. There was a sunny room given to him, the children liked him and she went out of the way to be friendly to him. But still he shrank from her and this hurt her, for she knew that there were lots of people who liked and admired her ; she wanted to help him for her own satisfaction so that people might talk well of her. She started reading the story about the fisherman and his wife, but soon her husband came and stopped by her. But he did not speak. Instead he lost himself in speculating whether the world would have been any different if Shakespeare had not existed, or if the progress of civilization depended upon great men, or was the lot of the common man better than what it was in the days of Pharacha, or, if at all the lot of the common man is the criterion by which one should judge the progress of civilization. Perhaps not. Perhaps the greatest good

required the existence of the share trade. But this thought was very distasteful to him. He would argue that the world exists for the average man and that the arts are merely a decoration imposed upon the top of human life; they do not express it. Nor is Shakespeare necessary for life.

He was well-versed in the philosophy of Locke, Hume and Berkeley and was an authority on the French Revolution. But he had not been able to achieve in life what he would have liked to achieve. So he would rather hide his true feelings. For this concealment, he would appear distasteful to Lily and Mr. Bankes, who wondered why he should need to conceal things and why a man who is brave in thought should be timid in life. He was venerable and laughable at one and the same time.

Chapter 9

As he walked away, Mr. Bankes said that it was a great pity that Mr. Ramsay could not behave like normal people. Lily Briscoe disliked him for his nervousness and to this Mr. Bankes added hypocrisy.

Lily saw him gaze at Mrs. Ramsay and feel very happy. This happiness was because of love, love that never tried to clutch its objects, but the love that Mathematicians have for their symbols and the poets for their phrases. It was meant to be spread all over the world. Could Mr. Bankes (asked Lily) explain the rapture that Mr. Ramsay felt when he saw his wife reading to James. This love made one feel that barbarity had ended and the reign of chaos subdued. Lily thought that people should love like that. Lily was an unmarried woman, and an unmarried woman, she thought, missed the best of life. She had her father, her home, but she liked to be herself. Mrs. Ramsay said that her dear Lily was a fool for all this. But Lily laughed it all away for the thought that Mrs. Ramsay did not understand her.

Lily was not getting her picture right. She could not bring on the canvas what she (vaguely) thought and wanted to paint. She perhaps did not quite know what she wanted to make of it—how to connect the mass on the right hand with that on the left. She might, she thought, break the vacancy in the foreground by an object, or bring the line of the branch across. But the danger was that the unity of the whole might be broken. So she took the canvas lightly off the easel.

Chapter 10

Cam was going past them. She dashed past like a bullet, an arrow or like a bird. Only when Mrs. Ramsay called her the second time, did she stop. Minta Doyle was used to going on after lunch-walks with Paul Rayleys and Mrs. Ramsay thought that she would marry that good fellow. She preferred Paul though he was

not so brilliant, to the intellectuals who wrote dissertations—men like Charles Tansley. She would encourage them to go on these walks. If nothing happened, she would have to speak seriously to Minta, for, she felt, she was responsible to Minta's parents ; she could not let her be tapering about all over the country like that. A woman had once charged Mrs. Ramsay with robbing her of her daughter's love. She, it was alleged, liked to dominate people, interfered in their affairs and made people act after her own wishes. Something that Minta's mother had said, had reminded Mrs. Ramsay of that charge.

Mrs. Ramsay did not want James or Cam to grow older. She thought the loss of childhood was irreparable. Why should the children grow up and go to school ? She was happy carrying a baby in her arm. Life had eternal problem ; suffering, death, the poor. But she wanted people to marry and to have children.

Chapter 11

Mrs. Ramsay sat in a mood of detachment, when life sank down for a moment and the range of experience seemed limitless. There was freedom, there was peace. She seemed to lose her personality and in that loss she lost the fret, the hurry, the stir of life. Her thinking would culminate into saying that we are in the hands of God. But soon she would regret the remark. How could have any God made this world of suffering and despair ? She thought that there was no reason, order, or justice, but suffering, death and the poor in this world. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit ; no happiness lasted.

Chapter 12

Neither Mr. Ramsay nor his wife wanted Prue to marry Tansley. Mr. Ramsay said that Mrs. Ramsay was teaching her daughters to exaggerate. She thought that Prue was going to be very beautiful. Mr. Ramsay said he saw no trace of it.

Mr. Ramsay said that he would be off for a day's walk, if the weather permitted. He would like a little solitude. It annoyed him that she did not protest. In fact, she knew that he would not go. He was too old to walk all day long. She knew that he had nothing whatever to complain of. And he seized her hand and kissed it with an intensity that brought tears into her eyes. She thought with delight how strong he was, and how untamed and optimistic. He seemed to her very different from others.

Lily Briscoe was strolling with William Bankes. Mrs. Ramsay thought that it meant that they would marry.

Chapter 13

William Bankes had visited a number of places including Rome. Lily too had been to Brussels and Paris. When they saw the

Ramsays, Lily said that that was the marriage—a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball.

Chapter 14

Minta and Paul had gone out for a walk. Nancy and Andrew had also gone with them. Andrew observed that Minta wore more sensible clothes than most people. She would jump straight into a stream and flounder across. He liked her rashness. She seemed to be afraid of nothing except bulls.

As they were coming back from the walk, Minta cried that she had lost her grandmother's brooch. That was the only ornament she possessed, and would rather have lost anything than that. They all went back to search for the brooch. But all in vain. They decided to come back the next day and resume the search. Paul assured her that he was very famous for finding out things. He told how once he found a gold watch and added that he would get up at dawn and resume the search. But Minta thought it was no use. She said she had presentiment when she put on the brooch that afternoon. Paul resolved secretly that if he did not find it out in the morning, he would go to Edinburgh and buy her another brooch just like the lost one, but a little more beautiful. He would prove what he could do.

And as they came out on the hill and saw the lights of the room beneath them, these lights seemed like things that were going to happen to him—his marriage, his children, his house. He thought he had been through a horrible experience and he must tell some-one about it. He thought that it had been the worst moment of his life when he asked Minta to marry him. He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay, for, he thought, she was the person who had made him do it. She had made him think he could do anything. Nobody else took him seriously. So thinking, they go back to Ramsay house-hold.

People were getting ready for dinner. The house was all lit up and that light after the darkness made his eyes feel full.

Chapter 15

Prue was telling her mother that Nancy had gone out with Paul and Minta.

Chapter 16

The fact that Nancy was with them, felt Mrs. Ramsay, made it less likely that anything happened to Paul and Minta.

Jesper and Rose said to Mrs. Ramsay that Mildred wanted to know whether they would take some more time to come for dinner.

Mrs. Ramsay replied in the negative. When fifteen people are sitting down to dinner, one cannot keep things waiting for ever. She was now beginning to feel annoyed with them for being so late. This annoyed her on top of her anxiety about them, that they should choose this very night to be out late, when she wished the dinner to be particularly nice since William Bankes had at last consented to dine with them. Everything depended upon things being served at the precise moment they were ready.

Then came the choosing of necklace for the dinner. This was a cere mony gone through every evening. And as in so many other things, this made Mrs. Ramsay sad. She felt that Rose would grow up and would suffer. It was Rose who offered her necklace to wear.

She heard a clatter in the hall. Paul and Minta had come back. She felt more annoyed with them than before. She went down and crossed the hall and bowed her head very slightly as if she accepted the tribute which, she thought, the people gathered there paid to her beauty. Then there was call to everybody to assemb for the dinner.

Chapter 17

She had made a mess of her life, thought Mrs. Ramsay, sitting at the head of the table like a queen. At the far end sat her husband frowning. But she did not know what he was frowning at. She did not understand why she felt any emotion for him. She had a sense of being past everything, through everything and out of everything. It is all come to an end, she thought.

She forebode to look at Mr. Tansley. Nothing seemed to have merged, they all sat separate and the effort of merging and creating rested on her. She realized the sterility of men. She gave herself a little shake and started feeling pity for Bankes, because he had no wife and no children and dined alone, except that night. She asked him if he had found his letters.

Lily thought that William Bankes was not the least pitiable, for he had his work. This reminded her that she too had her work. She thought of putting the tree further in the middle of her painting to avoid that awkward spot. This spot had been puzzling her.

Mr. Bankes said that one seldom got anything worthwhile by post, yet one always wanted letters. Charles Tansley thought that they talked rot. Mrs. Ramsay asked Tansley if he wrote many letters. She pitied him because she thought men lacked something which women possessed. Mr. Tansley said that women, with all the charm and all their silliness made civilization. He was not the sort to be dragged into this kind of a small talk.

He said to Mrs. Ramsay that there was no going to the lighthouse the next morning. Lily thought that he was the most

uncharming human being she had ever met. She was once again lost in her painting. She thought of laughing out at Mr. Tansley. She asked Mr. Tansley to take her to the lighthouse. He knew that she was making fun of him. He felt very rough, isolated and lonely. He knew that she despised him. So did everybody including Prue. But he was not going to be made a fool of by the women. So he turned towards the window and said very rudely that it would be too rough for her to go to the lighthouse, and that she would be sick.

It annoyed him that she should have made him speak like that before Mrs. Ramsay. He felt at his ease in his room amidst his books. He had never run a penny into debt ; he had never cost his father a penny since he was fifteen. He helped them at home out of his savings ; he was educating his sister. He wished that at this juncture he could say something which would prove to Mrs. Ramsay that he was not just a dry prig.

Mrs. Ramsay in the meantime went over her past and dwelt on Carrie Manning. She remembered a great deal about her, but, then, they had drifted apart. Mr. Bankes thought that people soon drifted apart. He had some satisfaction in thinking that he had not.

He never let himself get into a groove. He had friends in all circles. When Mrs. Ramsay breaks off to speak to the maid, he was annoyed. That is why he preferred dining alone. It would have hurt Mrs. Ramsay if he had refused to come, but it was not worth it for him. He thought of such a dinner with people a terrible waste of time. If he had been alone he would have been at work by now instead of wasting time over these triflings.

The truth was that he could not enjoy family life. It was in such a state that one asked oneself the purpose of living. He thought it was not quite desirable to go on bearing pain in this world. Such questions, he thought, one would not ask if one were occupied. He was sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay and had to talk to her. When at last, Mrs. Ramsay turned to him, he had to make some effort to bring himself back to talk to her.

Mr. Tansley thought that they were talking nonsense and that it was worthwhile staying with the Ramsays only once and no more. He wanted a chance to assert himself. He was fidgeting in his chair, as no one asked him his opinion. Lily Briscoe knew his desire remarkably well.

Mrs. Ramsay asked Lily if she too was planning to visit the lighthouse. She asked Mr. Tansley if he had been a good sailor. For Tansley it was a chance to assert himself, to speak out, but he had to be content with saying that he had never been sea-sick. He wanted people to know that his grandfather was a fisherman, his father a chemist and he himself had worked his way in life. He considered the people gathered there small fries compared to himself.

However, Lily Briscoe asked him again if he would take her to the lighthouse. She asked all this in a friendly manner now, because she could see Mrs. Ramsay silently asking her to be kind to the man, who would otherwise break down. Mr. Tansley understood the change in the mood and became communicative. He was relieved of his egotism, and told her how he was once thrown out of a boat when he was a baby and how he had learnt to swim. He talked of his uncle having kept a lighthouse. This caught everybody's attention.

Amidst all this, Lily thinks of her painting again and resolves to resume her work the next morning.

Men were talking of wages and unemployment. It was a relief to William Bankes because private life was being so disagreeable to him. But all this bored Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. They felt that something was lacking. Bankes and Tansley discussed politics, Mr. Tansley abused the government.

Mrs. Ramsay, who was being bored by this conversation wished her husband, who sat on the other end of the table, spoke. He had applied his mind to the question of wages and his intervention, she thought, would make all the difference to the course of the argument.

There were candles on both sides of the table. Windows were closed. Inside the room it was all order and harmony, but outside one had a reflection in which things wavered and vanished.

Minta and Paul now came in, and they hurriedly found their way to different ends of the table. With a lamentation in her voice, Minta said, that she had lost her grandmother's brooch. She sat by Mr. Ramsay. This aroused his chivalry and he asked her how she could be such a goose as to roam about the rocks in jewels in the beginning. She had felt really afraid of Mr. Ramsay. But later, she got on perfectly well. However, she made herself out more ignorant than she thought she was, because he liked telling her that she was a fool. But tonight, she was not frightened ; she sat by him smiling.

Seeing her smiling, Mrs. Ramsay thought that Paul and Minta must have been engaged, and for once she felt what she never had felt—jealousy. There was in Minta some quality, some lustre, some richness—which she herself did not have. These things attracted Mr. Ramsay and made him like girls like Minta. But Mrs. Ramsay was jealous only now and then when she looked her face in the mirror and felt that she was growing old, all because of her own fault.

Paul told them that "we" had gone back to search the brooch. This strengthened Mrs. Ramsay's suspicion for it was the first time that he had used the word "We".

Mr. Bankes admired a dish, which Mrs. Ramsay offered him with great care. All his love, all his reverence had returned. She spoke with a ring of joy and they admired the French dish, criticising English cookery. She laughed and gesticulated. How childish and absurd it was, Lily thought. She thought Mrs. Ramsay was great, she was irresistible. And now she had brought about this engagement of Paul and Minta.

The emotion and the aberration of love came over Lily too. She felt herself very inconspicuous by Paul's side. He was glowing, burning ; she was aloof, satirical ; he bound for adventure, she moved to the shore ; he launched incautious, she solitary left out.

On being asked by her, Paul smilingly replied that Minta had lost the brooch on the beach.

Lily felt very strongly like going to the beach and finding out that brooch. She would, she thought, then be included among the adventurers and sailors. But when she did say so to him, he simply laughed. And his chuckle perhaps meant that he did not care for her. It scorched her. And soon came to her the thought that she would not marry and undergo that degradation. She would rather go on painting. Living with Ramsays gave such a complexity of emotions. Lily thought that love was so beautiful, so exciting that she trembled on the verge of it and offered quite out of her own habit to look for a brooch on this beach. At the same time, love is the stupidest, the most barbaric of human passions that turns a nice young man into a bully.

Inspite of this, thought Lily, men have always loved but women have said that there was nothing more tedious, more puerile and inhuman than love.

Mrs. Ramsay saw that Lily and also Tansley were in difficulty. With Paul in the room, nobody would look at Tansley. But still he had his dissertation and he could take care of himself. With Lily it was different, she faded under Minta's glow, became more inconspicuous than ever. Yet, thought Mrs. Ramsay, of the two, Lily at forty would be better. There was something in Lily which Mrs. Ramsay liked, but, she feared, no man would marry her unless it was a much older man like Mr. Bankes. He seemed to care for her since his wife's death. But it was not love. She thought William must marry Lily ; they had so many things in common. She must arrange for them to take long walks together. Everything seemed possible.

Mrs. Ramsay now thinks of her husband and wondered how long he would be reading. William Bankes did not care for these questions for himself. He knew there were changes of taste in literature. He was for enjoying at the present moment what they could enjoy. His integrity seemed to be quite admirable to Mrs. Ramsay ; he never seemed to think. As against this, Mr. Ramsay

needed continued encouragement ; he needed to be told that his work would last.

Paul was distinguished from Tansley and said things not about himself. Tansley, on the other hand, talked of himself, even though he knew so much more about books than anybody else. He would like to know whether Mrs. Ramsay was feeling cold and this made him attractive.

Prue looked at Minta ; Mrs. Ramsay said to herself that Prue would be as happy as Minta, for she was her daughter.

The dinner was over. It was an uneventful affair after all. It was time to go. She suddenly thought that she liked Charles Tansley ; she liked even his awkwardness. Her husband was telling stories and she was waiting for them to finish.

Chapter 18

As usual, Lily was lost in thought. There was always something that had to be done. All went their different ways. Mr. Bankes took Charles Tansley by the arm and went off to the terrace to finish their discussion about politics.

Mrs. Ramsay went upstairs. The event had given her a sense of movement. Everything had to be made in order again. It was windy. She was solemn now, as always one feels after a noisy event. It flattered her to think that she had fed them all and that they had all come to her. She would be remembered by them all, particularly by Paul and Minta. She was susceptible to flattery.

The children were not asleep yet. It was almost eleven and they were talking, talking about that boar's skull again. She had told Mildred to remove it, but Mildred had forgotten. Now James and Cam were quarrelling ; what had possessed Edward to send them this horrid skull ? She had been foolish to let them nail it up here. Cam could not go to sleep with the skull in the room and James screamed if she touched it. In order to send Cam to sleep, Mrs. Ramsay wrapped the skull up in her own shawl. She succeeded in lulling Cam to sleep.

Then she went over to James and asked him to go to sleep, for the boar's skull was very much there under the shawl and not removed. He wanted to ask her whether they would go to the lighthouse the next day. She replied in the negative. She covered him. But he would never forget, she knew, and felt angry with her husband and Tansley.

Saying good night to Mildred she left the room.

She hoped that Charles Tansley would not bang his books on the floor upon the children's head, for they were excitable children

and did not sleep well. He looked clumsy and she would be relieved when he went. Yet she would have him treated better ; yet he looked admirable with her husband. His manners certainly wanted improving.

When Paul held a gold watch in his hand, it appeared that he had been engaged to Minta. He seemed to be saying to Mrs. Ramsay that it was all because of her. Mrs. Ramsay, on her part, thought Minta very lucky to have got Paul. She would have liked to go with them, but could not go. Instead, she went to the other room where her husband sat reading.

Chapter 19

She took up her stockings and started knitting. She knew that her husband did not want to be disturbed. He was reading something that moved him very much. Perhaps, he was thinking himself in person in the book. She had complete faith in him and would have liked him to intervene in the discussion at the dinner table.

She felt for a book and picked up. She went from page to page. Their eyes met, but they were quiet. He slapped his thighs, and this, she thought, showed his power, the life in him, his tremendous humour. He went on reading completely forgetful of what had happened in the evening. He forgot his own bothers and failures. When he finished the chapter, he thought that he had been arguing with somebody and had got the better of him. One ought not to complain, he felt, trying to stifle his desire to complain to his wife that young men did not admire him. But he was determined that he would not bother her again. The whole of one's life should not consist merely in going to bed with a woman, thought he, reading Balzac and Scott.

Mrs. Ramsay was now becoming conscious of her husband's presence. He liked to think that she was not clever, not book learned at all. He thought that she did not understand that he was reading.

She told him that Minta and Paul were engaged. He said that he had already guessed, and so nothing more could be said on this subject. But she said that it would be nice to marry a man with a wash-leather case, that Paul possessed. He asked her if she would not finish the stockings that night. She felt superior and said that she would not.

She felt that as he looked at her, he wanted her to tell him that she loved him. He called her heartless for not saying to him that she loved him. As she stood with stockings in hands, she knew that he was admiring her beauty. But she could not bring herself to tell him that she loved him.

PART II

TIME PASSES

Days rolled by. Time passed. Trip to the lighthouse was never made that summer. The Ramsays did not come back to their summer-house for some years. Ten years have passed.

Chapter 1

Andrew coming up from the beach said that it was too dark to see. Prue asked Andrew to put out the lights in the hall. Except Mr. Carmichael's candle, who read, all lamps were put out.

Chapter 2

Lamps extinguished ; darkness swallowed up everything. Nothing stirred in the dining room or the drawing room. Whatever else may perish or disappear, what lies here will remain steadfast, they thought.

Here Mr. Carmichael, who was reading Virgil, blew out his candle. It was past midnight.

Chapter 3

Night followed night. Now nights are full of winds. The leaves fly helter skelter. The sea tosses itself.

Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning. Mrs. Ramsay had died suddenly the night before. The arms that he stretched out remained empty, because Mrs. Ramsay had died.

Chapter 4

The summer-house was now empty and deserted. Only some clothes and such other things reminded one that people had been here. There reigned silence and loneliness but because of the silence, the loneliness was lifeless. The sea wind, as it came into the room, seemed to ask "Will you fade ? Will you perish ?"

Chapter 5

At last Mrs. M'cNab came to the summer-house to open all windows and dust the bed room. She moved from room to room and found a picture of desolation. Something which had been gay, was robbed of meaning, trodden down. Mrs. M'cNab was a caretaker or a maid-servant.

She was seventy and was bowed down by weariness. She was sad and wondered how long all this would last. But she summoned her

courage, stood upon her feet again and went ahead with the job of cleaning and dusting the things. Two of her children had been base-born and one had deserted her.

Chapter 6

Prue Ramsay had been married that May. She looked very beautiful. She died that summer of child-birth, which was a tragedy. People said nobody deserved happiness more.

Now and then, some glass tinkled in the cupboard as if a giant voice had shrieked so loud in its agony that tumblers in the cupboard vibrated too. Then again silence fell. And so on.

The First World War came. Andrew Ramsay who had enlisted, died in France in a shell explosion. He had died instantaneously.

Mr. Carmichael that spring had brought out a volume of poems which had an unexpected success. The war had revived people's interest in poetry.

Chapter 7

Storms and stillness held their sway without disturbance night after night. Listening from the upper room of summer-house only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning. There was darkness in daylight. In the spring time the garden urns were filled with wind-blown plants and looked gay. Violets and daffodils appeared on the Island of Skye. But the stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of night.

Chapter 8

Mrs. M'cNab started thinking that no one would visit the summer-house which in fact might be sold. She stopped and picked a bunch of flowers to take home with her. She laid them on the table while she dusted. She was fond of flowers. She stood arms akimbo in front of the looking glass. The books and things were mouldy, for the house had not been cleaned because of the war. It was beyond one person's strength to get it straight now. She was too old. Her legs pained her. All those books needed to be laid out in the sun on the grass. Wall papers had came down in the hall. The rain pipe had blocked over the study window and let the water in. The carpet was ruined.

People had left clothes in the cupboards in all the bed rooms. She did not know what to do with them. She looked at Mrs. Ramsay's things and said with a sigh, that she would never want them again. She died years ago in London. There was her old grey cloak, which she wore while gardening. Mrs. M'cNab fingered it. The garden was a pitiful sight now, all run to riot. She could imagine

Mrs. Ramsay with one of the children in that cloak. There were boots and shoes and a brush and a comb left on the table as if she expected to come back the next day. She had died very suddenly, people said.

Once the Ramsays had thought of coming to the summer-house, but had put off the visit because of the war and because the journey was so difficult. They had only sent her money all these years and expected to find things in order as they had left them. The drawers were full of things. Mrs. M'cNab remembered that Mrs. Ramsay had a pleasant way with her and the girls all liked her.

Many things had changed since then. Many families had lost their dear ones. So were Mrs. Ramsay, Andrew and Prue all dead. Every one had lost someone during the war. Prices had gone up acutely and did not come down again. Mrs. M'cNab could well remember her in her grey cloak, stooping over her flowers. Things were better then than they are now, Mrs. M'cNab sighed. She came to a place which was a nursery. It was all damp here and the plaster was falling. There were rats. She did not like to be at dusk here alone. It was too much for one woman. She left, locking the door.

Chapter 9

The house was deserted. Everything decayed. The swallows were nested in the drawing room. The floor was strewn with straws. The lawn waved with long grass. The place was gone to rack and ruin. Only the lighthouse beam entered the room for a moment, sent its sudden glare over the bed and the walls, piercing the darkness of winter slightly.

Mrs. M'cNab had now Mrs. Bast as her helper to clean the house. They got to work. All of a sudden Mrs. M'cNab would see that the house was ready. She got a letter from one of the Ramsays daughters to get the house ready immediately. They were coming for the summer at last, and expected to find things as they had left them. They cleaned and rescued from the ravage of time now a basin, now a cupboard, fetched up from oblivion all the Waverley novels and a tea-set. George, Mrs. Bast's son, caught the rats and cut the grass. It was a lot of work that they had to do. Books were to be arranged, the taps to be set right.

Mrs. Bast wondered why they hung the beast's skull there. Perhaps it had come to them from a foreign country. The Ramsays, to be sure, had friends staying in the eastern countries. She knew that they would find it changed now. She saw her son, George, scything the grass.

At last, after days of work within, and cutting and digging without, things were set in order.

People started arriving. Lily Briscoe had her bag carried to the house late one evening in September. Mr. Carmichael also came by the same train.

Chapter 10

As Lily laid her head on the pillow in the clean still room, it looked that peace had dawned. Through the open window, the murmur of the beauty of the world came, though indistinctly. The house was full again. Mrs. Beckwith was staying there. Lily was fatigued by the journey and immediately went to sleep. Mr. Carmichael read a book by candle light. He also, at last, closed his book and fell asleep. He thought that the things looked much the same as they did years ago. The sight of the sea, breaking in measure, round the isle soothed the visitors. The night wrapped them. Nothing broke their sleep until dawn.

PART III

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Chapter 1

Lily Briscoe is in a mood of contemplation. She was wondering what it all meant—their having come back to the summer-house after so many years and Mrs. Ramsay being dead.

She had come only the previous day, and was already on her breakfast table. It was very early yet—not even eight in the morning. She knew that the expedition comprising of Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James was going to the Lighthouse. They should have gone already. But they had slept past the time they had intended to sleep. They were not ready yet. Mr. Ramsay lost his temper and said that there was no use of going so late. He was feeling restless, pacing up and down in the room.

Nancy came in and asked in a queer half dazed and half desperate way, "what does one send to the lighthouse ?" She was looking like forcing herself to do what she despised to do. At any other time Lily could have suggested tea, tobacco, newspaper, but this morning everything seemed so extraordinarily queer that a question like Nancy's made one keep asking in a stupefied gape as to what one does, why is one sitting here after all. Sitting alone on the long table, she felt cut off from the other people and was able only to go on watching, asking and wondering. The house, the place, the morning all seemed very strange to her. She had no attachment here.

It looked that the link that bound things had been cut. Now it all appeared aimless, all chaotic, as she repeated that Mrs. Ramsay, Prue and Andrew were killed. It roused no feelings in her. Things had broken apart after Mrs. Ramsay's death.

Suddenly Mr. Ramsay passed by and Lily pretended to drink from an empty cup to avoid him. She heard him say 'alone' and 'perished'. That is what he was. Old Mr. Carmichael came in, took his coffee and went out to sit in the sun. Going to the lighthouse was frightening and exciting at the same time. Lily wanted to pursue her train of thoughts ; she wanted to be alone. Suddenly, she remembered of things ten years ago. She had thought of shifting a tree in the middle in her picture. But she had never finished the picture. It had been knocking about in her mind all these years. She would paint her picture now. She looked for her paints, for she would start painting immediately.

She fetched herself a chair, and got to work. It must have been precisely here that she stood ten years ago. It seemed now that she could solve the problem in her painting. She knew what she wanted to do. But with Mr. Ramsay bearing down on her, she could do nothing. Every time he approached her walking up and down the terrace, chaos approached ; she could not paint. If he got her unengaged even a moment, he could come and disturb her, telling her that they were all changed.

The Ramsays had to be ready to leave for the lighthouse at half past seven. James was now sixteen and Cam seventeen or about that. The night had been starlit and beautiful.

Lily wanted Mr. Ramsay to be some distance away so that she could concentrate on her painting. While he was near her, she could not see the colours ; she could not see the lines. She rejected one brush for the other.

She thought that Mr. Ramsay had never given ; he had always taken. Mrs. Ramsay had always given him. So will she herself be forced to give. Giving, Mrs. Ramsay had died. And here was Lily at forty four wasting her time, unable to do a thing. She thought that it was all Mrs. Ramsay's fault. The step where she sat was empty. She felt that she should not have come to the summer-house when Mrs. Ramsay was dead. A brush was the only dependable thing in a world of chaos and strife and ruin and one should not trifle with it. Mr. Ramsay seemed to say to her that she would not touch her canvas until she had given him what he wanted. He was near her again. Then she thought of being resigned to her lot and give him what she could.

Chapter 2

Mr. Ramsay thought Lily had shrivelled slightly. She did not look quite attractive. There had been some talk of her marrying William Bankes once, but nothing had come out of it. Bankes' wife had been fond of him.

Mr. Ramsay asked her if she needed something. She was under

terrible strain and said she had every thing. There was an aweful pause and they both looked at the sea. She hoped it would be calm enough for them to land at the lighthouse, she said. He was impatient at the mention of the lighthouse. There issued a groan from him which would have moved any woman, but not Lily Briscoe, who, he thought, was a peevish, ill-tempered, dried up old maid, rather than a normal woman.

He told her that he had a particular reason for wanting to go to the lighthouse. His wife used to send the lighthouse-keeper certain things ; there was a poor sickly boy, the lighthouse-keeper's son. She kept looking for somebody to come and interrupt. He said that such expeditions were very painful, but Lily kept mum. Mr. Ramsay said to himself that she was a stone. He had assumed a pose of extreme decrepitude and even tottered a little. She could stand it no longer. He made a pathetic spectacle. She drew her skirt a little closer round her knees lest she should get wet.

She at last heard sounds in the house. James and Cam must be coming. She praised his boots when he wanted her to give him solace. Boots, he said, were the chief curse of mankind. Boot-makers make it their business to torture and cripple the human foot. He wanted her to see what she had never seen, boots of this shape before. They were made of the finest leather in the world.

She was sorry to have called him a play-actor. As he tied and untied his shoe-laces, tears rolled into her eyes out of sympathy for him.

Presently, Cam and James appeared on the terrace. Even they looked a serious, melancholy couple and she was annoyed with them for that. She felt empty. Her feelings of sympathy for him came too late. He was ready to leave and no longer needed them. She felt snubbed and thought that he had become a very distinguished elderly man, who had no need of her at all.

Mr. Ramsay had the bearing of a leader of an expedition. He led the way with his firm military tread, carrying brown paper parcels down the path, with his children following him. The children looked fine but Lily thought that there was pallor in their eyes which showed that they had suffered some great tragedy.

As they passed the lawn, Lily thought that she saw a procession go, drawn on by some stress of common feelings ; it was a little company bound together and strangely impressive to her. Mr. Ramsay saluted her, as they went. She was reminded how Andrew was killed by a shell. It seemed as if Mr. Ramsay had shed worries and ambitions and hope of sympathy and the desire for praise, had entered some other region, and was being drawn on out of her reach.

Chapter 3

So, they were gone. Lily sighed with relief and disappointment. She felt curiously divided as if one part of her were drawn out with them. It was hazy, still day and the lighthouse looked at an immense distance.

She was now planning to paint. But there was a great difference in planning airily and actually taking her brush and making the first mark. She had taken the wrong brush in Mr. Ramsay's presence and her easel was at the wrong angel. She set everything right. But how to start ? One line placed on the canvas committed her to innumerable risks and irrevocable decisions. All that seemed simple in idea, but very complex in practice.

With a curious physical sensation, she made her first decisive stroke. The brush descended on the canvas a second time and then a third time. Pausing and flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another. And all were related. So appeared lines on the canvas that enclosed a space.

Always it was in her nature or in her sex that before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had some moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul, bereft of body, exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt. Then why did she paint ? Presently, she heard a voice saying that she could not paint. For the man (Mr. Ramsay) loomed before her ; it protruded. But while her hands quivered with life, the rhythm was strong enough to bear her alongwith it on the current.

She was losing consciousness of the outer world. And as she lost consciousness of the outer things, of her name and personality and of whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depth scenes and names and sayings and memories and ideas like a fountain, spurting over that glaring hideously difficult white space while she modelled it with green and blue.

Lily remembered Charles Tansley having once said that women could not paint, could not write. But the war had undone both men and women. He always carried a book under his arm. She recalled that once they had all gone to the beach. Mrs. Ramsay too was with them, and watched her throwing stones and getting on well with Mr. Tansley. This scene on the beach, this moment of friendship and liking survived after all these years. So, she dipped into it to refashion her memory of Charles Tansley, and it strayed into her mind like a work of art.

She must rest for a while. And then she pondered over the meaning of life. This was a question that tended to close on one as

one grows in years. The great revelation by way of an answer to this question never came. Instead, there were little daily illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark. There was one. She and Charles Tansley were on the breaking waves and Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together, Mrs. Ramsay saying life stands still here and making of the moment something permanent. This was of the revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape.

All was silence ; nobody seemed yet to be stirring in the house. They were sleeping. She hoped that nobody would come out of the house and that she might be left alone to go on thinking, to go on painting. She turned to her canvas, but impelled by some curiosity, driven by an expressed sympathy, she walked a pace or so to the end of the lawn to see whether she could see that little company setting sail. The sea was very calm. She imagined in a boat at a distance Mr. Ramsay, with Cam and James, sitting. She watched the boat stir with some deliberation.

Chapter 4

The sails flapped over the heads of the Ramsays. Now and then they rippled with a little breeze in them. But the boat was making no motion at all. Mr. Ramsay sat in the middle of the boat. He would be impatient, thought James and Cam. James was steering the boat. Mr. Ramsay was sharp and curt because of their stillness. He would not be content until they were flying along. He had forced the children to come against their will this time. They had to follow him and could not speak to him now. They decided to resist tyranny together. They sat in silence while he frowned and fidgeted. They waited impatiently for a breeze. They hoped that the whole expedition would fail.

But the boat now began to move. Mr. Ramsay was relieved. James would be forced to keep his eye all the time on the sail. For, if he forgot and the sails shivered and the boat slackened, Mr. Ramsay would rebuke him. Macalister, the old sailor, told them a story about a ship wreck and told them how men struggled for their lives. Mr. Ramsay seemed to relish it all. He wanted men to struggle and strive and women to keep the household. Cam thought that he was so brave and so adventurous that if he had been there on the spot of the tragedy, he would have launched the life boat and gone to the wrecked ship. He was feeling proud of himself, Cam thought.

But she remembered their pact to face him. They had been weighed down ; he had worn them down with his authority and gloom. He went through the rite of going to the lighthouse for his own pleasure and in memory of dead people (his wife), and they hated it all. All their pleasure of the day was spoiled.

As he steered, James thought wishfully that he might escape and be relieved of this burden ; they might land somewhere and be

free then. They had both a sense of escape and exaltation as they looked at each other.

The shore had now been left behind and Cam could not see their house distinctly. Mr. Ramsay as he imagined himself walking on the terrace, felt old and bored. He felt bereft and called up before his mind's eyes people who sympathised with him. He murmured and the mournful words were heard by them all. It shocked and outraged them.

Suddenly he shouted and they looked at the island again. He teased Cam by asking if she did not know the points of the compass and the North from the South. He showed her where their house was. He scolded her because he could not understand the state of mind of anyone. She was frightened and vague. Mr. Ramsay thought women were always like that. He had never been able to understand this even with his wife. But, in fact, he liked this vagueness in women ; it was part of their extraordinary charm. He thought of saying some simple, easy thing to Cam in order to make her smile.

James thought Cam would now give way and he would be left alone to bear the tyranny of his father. She did not know how to answer him about the puppy that he talked about. He demanded care and sympathy even from his daughter, while James asked her to resist him. Of all human qualities she reverenced justice most. She said that Jesper would look after the puppy. He asked her what name she would give to the puppy. She was quiet. And Mr. Ramsay decided that he would not bother her if she did not answer. She did want to answer, but, try as she might, she could think of nothing to say.

Mr. Ramsay took out his book and began to read. His blindness and tyranny were intolerable to Cam. It had ruined her childhood and raised bitter storms, so that even now she would sometime wake in the night trembling with some command of his. So, she said nothing.

Chapter 5

Lily Briscoe had not given sympathy to Mr. Ramsay, and this made her uneasy. She had always found him difficult and had never been able to praise him to his face. And that made their relationship neutral without any element of sex in it, which made his manner so gallant to Minta. He would pick a flower for Minta and lend her books.

Lily thought of painting again. At the same time she seemed to be sitting beside Mr. Ramsay on the beach. She is again reminded of Mrs. Ramsay, when they had all gone to the beach ten years before. She stepped back to get her canvas in perspective. Paintin was a difficult thing to do.

Lily thought of Rayleys. Things had not gone well with them after the first year of their marriage. They too had come to the summer-house. Paul had come early and gone to bed. Minta was late. She was wretched, tired, garish. They were about to quarrel on some point but kept their voice low lest they should wake up their children—the two boys. Lily went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past. Paul had said to Minta that she had ruined his life. Their love had all gone. He had taken up with some other woman, a serious woman. Minta had described her admiringly. She shared Paul's views. Far from breaking the marriage, the alliance had righted it ; they were excellent friends.

Lily said she would move the tree in the middle. She felt happy when she thought that she would never marry. She loved William Bankes and his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life. William said that she was astonishingly beautiful. But, she thought, beauty has its penalty—it stifles life. She wanted to ask Carmichael a number of questions about life, about death, about Mrs. Ramsay, but could not do so.

However she felt that Carmichael heard what she had not been able to say. He was an inscrutable old man with a yellow stain on his beard, his poetry, his puzzles, sailing serenely through a world which satisfied all his wants. So, she knew, he could answer. She looked at her picture. His answer would have been how "you and I and she pass and vanish, nothing stays, all changes, but not words, not paint".

But her picture would certainly be worth something. Her eyes were full of tears, though she had perfect control of herself in every other way. Perhaps she was crying for Mrs. Ramsay. She felt that life was startling, unpredictable, unknown.

Chapter 6

The Macalister's boy took one of the fish from the sea, as they went in the boat, to bait his hook with. The mutilated fish was thrown back into the sea, because he needed only a part.

Chapter 7

Lily cried for Mrs. Ramsay, but nothing happened. The pain increased, but old Carmichael had not heard her. He remained benignant and calm and sublime, perhaps. Presently, the pain lessened ; she resolved not to remember Mrs. Ramsay.

Lily took her tubes and astonishingly she attacked her problem effectively. She saw things clearly. She saw a brown spot in the middle of the bay ; it was Mr. Ramsay's boat. It was half way across the bay. It was a fine morning. Lily was wondering where the old man (Mr. Ramsay) was.

Chapter 8

Cam thought that those on the shore felt nothing. It was being more distant and more peaceful. The sails sagged and they came to a stop, waiting for a breeze. They were miles from the shore and miles from the lighthouse in the hot sun. The lighthouse became immovable, as everything came to a standstill. As the sun grew hotter, they came closer and felt each other's presence. But Mr. Ramsay went on reading with his legs curled under him. James thought that his father turned every page with a peculiar gesture to him, now assertively, now commandingly, now demanding pity. James kept dreading the moment when he would speak sharply to him. James was so angry that he thought that if his father asked him some unreasonable question, he would take a knife and strike him at the heart. He had always kept this symbol of taking a knife and striking the heart.

Now, however, as James grew older, he felt himself in an impotent rage. But he thought wherever he might be, he would track down tyranny and despotism. He called his father a tyrant because he made people do what they did not want to do and cut their right to speak.

James looked at the lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rock and the tower, barred with black and white. He could see the windows in it and the washings spread out to dry.

Chapter 9

Lily Briscoe thought that the sea was without a stain on it and it looked like spread out silk across the bay. Distance had an extra-ordinary power, the Ramsays seemed to have been swallowed up by the sea, and had become part of the nature of things. The steamer itself had vanished. Only some smoke hung about.

Chapter 10

Cam had never seen the island from the sea before this. Now she was telling herself an imaginary story of adventure, of how they once took a boat and escaped from a sinking ship. She wanted the sense of adventure and escape. But then she was happy that she should be alive. An impulse came to her that her father was not a tyrant ; she thought him to be a wise man. But James was a sarcastic brute when he talked of his father.

Chapter 11

So much, thought Lily Briscoe, depends on distance, for her feelings for Mr. Ramsay changed as he sailed farther and farther across the bay. He seemed to become more and more remote.

But, near her, on the grass, Mr. Carmichael groaned. She

laughed. But he again settled into the chair, puffing and blowing like some sea monster.

A strange feeling of completeness and harmony came over Lily Briscoe. It was some such feeling ten years ago 'which made her say that she was in love with the place. Love had thousand shapes. There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together, and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene or meeting of people one of those compacted things over which thought lingered and love played.

She supposed that the Ramsays would be at the lighthouse by lunch time. She somehow could not achieve a balance between two opposite forces—Mr. Ramsay and the picture. This balance was necessary. There was something wrong with the design perhaps.

What was the problem then ? Phrases came, visions came. But what she wanted to get hold of was the thing itself, before it had been made anything. The human apparatus for painting was a miserable machine ; it always broke down at the critical moment.

The dry lawn where they sat was their world. Carmichael was growing old. She would perhaps never see him again. He was growing famous. His poetry had been received well. He wanted to remain alone. He was awkward at the dinner table.

She thought of Mr. Tansley. He had got a fellowship and got married. She had once gone to a hall and heard him speak during the war. He was preaching brotherly love. Lily wondered how a man like Tansley could do that.

Mrs. Ramsay had thought, recalled Lily, that the latter would marry Mr. Carmichael. She might have told him that she would marry him. Time after time, the same thing had passed between them. She was with her impulses and quickness, he with his shudders and gloom. He would hang stealthily around the place where she sat writing letters and talking. She took care to evade him and pretended not to see him.

Lily's thought turn to Prue. Prue sat in the middle between brothers and sisters, always so occupied that she scarcely spoke. Mrs. Ramsay would promise that one of those days some happiness would be hers. But she had enjoyed that happiness only for a year, after which she died of child-birth.

At last somebody came into the drawing room. But, as she wanted, he stayed there and did not come out to disturb her. Her mood was coming back to her. She was determined not to be put off, but to complete the picture. But some white thing was seen in the room. The old horror came back and she cried "Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay" ; she could imagine Mrs. Ramsay sitting on the chair.

Lily went past Mr. Carmichael holding her brush to the edge of the lawn. She wanted to see the boat ; she wanted Mr. Ramsay.

Chapter 12

Mr. Ramsay had nearly finished his reading. James thought that he looked like some old stone lying on the sand. He was a picture of loneliness. They were very close to the lighthouse. One could see it very clearly. A man had come out, looked at them and gone in again. The lighthouse was a stark tower on a bare rock. It confirmed some of James' feelings about his own character. He thought of the old ladies at the island.

Cam was tired of looking at the sea. Still both she and James looked at their father. She gazed at the wide expanse of the sea. The island had grown so small, that it looked like a leaf. Nothing had been left of the garden ; she imagined beautiful things. She was falling asleep.

After his long silence, Mr. Ramsay asked them to follow him. He was hungry and it was time for lunch. And, besides, he said they were right on the lighthouse. Macalister praised James' steering and said that he was doing very well. But, James thought, his father never praised him. Mr. Ramsay opened the parcel and shared out the sandwitches. Now, he was happy. He would have liked to live in a cottage and lunch about in the harbour.

Cam thought that she could go on thinking what she liked and would not be drowned. They were sailing so fast that it was very exciting. It looked they were doing two things—eating lunch and making for safety after a shipwreck. Cam wondered if the provisions would last. Macalister was seventy five, Mr. Ramsay seventy one. Macalister said that he had never seen a doctor, never lost a tooth. Mr. Ramsay would like her children to be like that. Mr. Ramsay was simple and shabby.

At last he took out his watch, made some calculation and said that James had done well, he had steered them like a born sailor. This is what James had been wanting. His father had praised him and he was happy.

Now they could see two men on the lighthouse watching them and making ready to meet them. Mr. Ramsay was ready to land. He might be thinking of looking back at this island ; he had found it ; he had reached it. But he said nothing. Holding his parcel, he sprang like a young man on to the rock and the children rose to follow him.

Chapter 13

Lily felt that Mr. Ramsay must have reached the lighthouse. She was tired. The lighthouse had become invisible in the blue

haze. She thought she had at last given Mr. Ramsay whatever she wanted to give him when he left her in the morning.

Old Carmichael stood beside her, reading. He also said that they would have landed on the lighthouse. They had been thinking the same thing. There was no need of speaking.

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something, she returned to her canvas. There was his picture. Even if it would be destroyed, it mattered not. With an intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there in the centre. It was done. The picture was finished. Laying down her brush in great fatigue, she said, she had had her vision.

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Critical Commentary on the Novel

PART I

THE WINDOW

The first part of *To the Lighthouse* has Mrs. Ramsay at its centre. Mrs. Ramsay provides structurally and psychologically a cohesive force which gives a sense of unity and meaning to the lives of people around her. This "Centre" provides at the same time a structural cohesion to the first part of the novel. She is the centre around which action and movement is built humanly as well as artistically. The window gives access to the centre. It is as if a slow-moving camera were swinging alternately from outside the window or the lawn to within or the drawing room. But the two are not separated.

There is a surface verbal structure too consisting of the remarks about the weather in the earlier section. This is apart from the spatial or spanning structure. In the later sections of Part I, a narrative link is formed by the snatches of the story, which Mrs. Ramsay reads to James. The method can be illustrated from the first chapter of Part I : "Yes of course, if it's fine tomorrow" said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you will have to be up with the lark."

"But", said his father stopping in front of the drawing room window, "It won't be fine."

"But it may be fine—I expect it will be fine" said Mrs. Ramsay.

"It is, due west", said the atheist Tansley. "There will be no landing on the lighthouse tomorrow", said Charles Tansley. The movement of the first section begins leisurely. It is as if Virginia Woolf applied a slowing down process in the above passage, so that what happens below the surface in the consciousness of the characters involved in the narrative exchange, may be explored.

Part I opens with the focus on the centre. Mrs. Ramsay is sitting at the window which links the lawn with the indoors. First to come to the centre are Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley, who, walking on the terrace, stop to exchange a few words with her.

Their insistence that there will be no going to the lighthouse triggers the violent reaction in Mrs. Ramsay which points the direction for the exploration in her consciousness. The core of darkness, that can go anywhere, recreates for the reader an impression of Charles Tansley as he is seen through the eyes of the children, and indicates Mrs. Ramsay's more complex reaction to him.

As the two men resume their walk on the terrace, impressions, as they invade Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness, fill out the scene for the reader with the gruff murmur irregularly broken by the taking out and the putting in of pipes, of the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, etc. The scene is built up further as Mrs. Ramsay looks out from the window and finds that the two men have separated, Mr. Ramsay reciting aloud to himself, with Lily Briscoe sitting at the edge of the lawn painting her picture.

There is a sense of ritual as Lily walks off with William Bankes. The sudden chill in the air exactly focuses as being after 6 p.m. on a mid-september evening. Their conversation builds up further the picture of life in the Ramsay family that is gradually taking shape. Mr. Bankes' reflections especially provide a peep into Mr. Ramsay's character and achievement. Finally, in making their way back to the lawn, they come again within Mrs. Ramsay's range of vision. Thus, there is a simple transition, back to the centre, to Mrs. Ramsay's reflections.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay come together and this coming together brings a clash as Mr. Ramsay replies, "Damn you" to her irrational arguments about the weather after which he moves away from the window. As he continues his walks, Virginia Woolf superbly traces the setting down of an emotion in him until in safety he can look calmly at Mrs. Ramsay in the window. That glimpse fortified him and satisfied him and enabled him to arrive at a perfectly clear understanding of the problem which now engaged the energies of his splendid mind. Gradually, as Mr. Ramsay follows through his reflections on his life and achievements, he comes to acknowledge to himself his dependence on his wife and her possession of a power and strength different in kind from his own.

With Chapter 7, Mr. Ramsay returns to his wife for sympathy and reassurance that he is not a failure. This time, instead of a clash, there is a sense of union and intimacy, in which she does reassure him and make him feel that he lives in heart of life. She receives in return his gratitude. She experiences the rapture of successful creation for what she gives him.

Mrs. Ramsay, however, does not enjoy complete success, nor is she successful with everyone. This is suggested both symbolically as well as structurally. Mr. Carmichael walks past the window and into the house avoiding her. It lends her self-awareness. She would not have liked Mr. Ramsay to see her in her defeat as he passes by her.

Mr. Ramsay turns his back on the bay searching out the figure of his wife at the window. This movement is symbolic of the apparent division of his life between his family and his work, which made William Bankes feel that through his marriage, he had diminished in stature, and made Mr. Ramsay himself admit that he had not done the things he might have done.

Then, there is a transition back to Lily and William Bankes.

The focus of interest now shifts to Paul and Minta. Structurally the transition to their story is contrived.

At the end of Chapter 10, with the finishing of the story that she has been reading to James, Mrs. Ramsay is left alone for the first time when James is taken off to bed. When in this solitude she sees the light coming from the lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay enters into a far deeper level of thought and awareness. There she can find an area of stability and a sense of wholeness that will restore her spent-up energy and see her through life. The long, steady stroke of the lighthouse beam enters into her consciousness in such a way that she identifies herself with it. As she is thus absorbed, her appearance on a stern aspect is making her seem remote to her husband.

Chapter 12, with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay walking together across the lawn, forms a kind of resolution to give and take through the window. The irony of their walk is that they are both unable to talk of what is closest to them.

In Chapter 13, the surface spatial movement is continued with two couples on the lawn, Lily and Bankes, and Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. They reflect on each other's life and represent at the same time contrasting visions of life.

For Lily, the particular is transcended to present her eyes a universal truth or reality embodied in, but bigger than the private and the individual.

At the end of Chapter 13, the structure once again seems to be contrived. Mrs. Ramsay asks Prue if Nancy went with Paul and Minta. Prue's reply forms the whole of Chapter 15. Eight pages intervene between the question and the answer.

The bedroom scene forms a prelude to the dinner party. At the party, all the coming to her in the course of the day is somehow brought together to be re-enacted within a group. Family and friends are all brought together in a circle with Mrs. Ramsay sitting at the head. She seemed to be repeating the role she performed in reassuring her husband of his importance and success. But this time this role is played in a different manner. "She had a sense of being passed everything, through everything, out of everything as she helped the soup."

Throughout the party, tensions form, intensify and resolve. Not only does Mrs. Ramsay relate to individual after individual, as with William Bankes, when she bores with her small talk, and her husband at the end of the table, but she must help individuals to relate to each other. By a look, she compels Lily to be considerate towards Charles Tansley. As a result of this intervention, Tansley is brought out of his isolation and gets the attention he requires in order to feel at ease. Mr. Carmichael is brought out of himself by the beauty of the bowl of fruit at the centre of the table. Minta's gay attractiveness rouses Mr. Ramsay's chivalry and in his responsiveness to her, he rises out of his brooding. The laughter of the children is another contribution to the sense of unity and the whole being built up.

Once the party has been set in motion, Mrs. Ramsay can slip back for a moment to be, as it were, an on-looker of observing the structuring of the occasion that is being continued by the conversation of the men. To convey this, Virginia Woolf uses the image of physical structuring of building.

The end of the party and the end of part one of *To the Lighthouse*, provides a kind of resolution of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay polarity that has underpinned the whole structural movement of 'The Window.' Alone together at the end of the day, tensions have eased. And in one of those significant moments, she having looked back on her party to preserve its essence, he having extracted the core of life from the book he is reading, Mrs. Ramsay looks out of the window towards the lighthouse. Turning to him, she smiles.

PART II

TIME PASSES

Part II, covering a span of ten years, is made up of ten sections. Section I merely carries over the surface narrative from Part I as William Bankes, Andrew, Prue and Lily Briscoe make final remarks before retiring for the night. Comments, however, such as 'Well, we must wait for the future to show' and 'It's almost too dark to see' introduce the two main themes of Part II, the theme of darkness, and the accompanying theme of waiting or hoping for a return of the light. Section I concludes with the literal fact that all the lights in the house are put out. Sections 2 to 6 transpose the literal to the symbolic.

So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof, a downpouring of immense darkness began.

These sections, which together create an elegy on the darkness and anguish of human life, conveying poignantly the pain of death and the horror of war, are written with an imaginative or poetic

intensity. Because of their power and compression they are analysed in detail. The remaining sections, which evoke vividly the feel of an empty and decaying house with its memories or ghosts, are lightened by the pathetically humorous description of the char, struggling against the threatening destructive forces, until finally, in Section 9, the house is restored to order and some of the original inmates return, and in Section 10 peace has come. The struggle against darkness and the waiting is over.

Section 2

Section 2 begins with a descriptive comment which reads as a suggestive variant of a fact literally expressed at the end of Section 1, though there it is expressed in a casual, matter-of-fact narrative tone. To the first point, the extinguishing of the lights, two other descriptive facts are added : the moon had sunk, a thin rain is falling. The two literal details of darkness and rain are fused in such a way that metaphysical idea is suggested : 'a downpouring of immense darkness began'. The structure that is beginning to form is, therefore, associative. The intensity and force of the mental and spiritual darkness is gradually led up to by an account of a darkness persona. The personification is reinforced and extended by juxtaposing with it the metaphor of the 'flood' of darkness. The effectiveness of the description of the destructive 'flood' invading the house is created largely through the verbs used to suggest the animated movement of a creature of prey :

> "darkness...creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds...swallowed up here a jug and basin...there are the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers..."

F. R. Leavis, writing about Edward Thomas's poetry, makes a casual but very apt reference to one of the main qualities and techniques of Virginia Woolf's art :

> Edward Thomas's concern with the outer scene is akin to Mrs. Woolf's, unobtrusively the focus shifts and we become aware of the inner life which the sensory impressions are notations for.

> So it is that in this passage on darkness, the animated and symbolic form of darkness reaches beyond the house and its furnishings, or the materialistic, to the 'inner life'

A triple form of darkness is then suggested : a darkness in which no support can be had, a darkness in which there is threat, and the darkness of emptiness or absence. For these three different aspects of the inner darkness there are three notations :

> **"Sometimes a hand was raised as if to clutch something or ward off something."**

With economy of language the one image of the hand is working in two different ways to suggest the first two forms of darkness. The third notation is :

> ...or somebody groaned, or somebody laughed aloud as if sharing a joke with nothingness.

> Laughter and groaning represent the two basic and all-inclusive emotions of joy and sorrow.

> The last word of the paragraph : 'nothingness', is then picked up and used in a different way, and in a half-humorous mood.

> Nothing stirred in the drawing-room or in the dining-room or on the staircase.

The invasion of the house by 'Nothing', or by the 'certain arts', leads to the triple question : 'Were they allies ? Were they enemies ? How long would they endure ? Such questions could be the basic questions of a man's search for reality, or for what is being sought after in the book as a whole. But the search of the 'airs' helped by the 'random light', perhaps from the lighthouse, ends ambiguously with the figure in bed : 'the shut eyes and the loosely clapping fingers' so that they leave the house unsatisfied. They seem defeated by the sense of reality being there which they cannot reach, or of 'what lies here is steadfast'? which had escaped their scrutiny. Section 2, as a whole, is bounded by the reference to Mr. Carmichael. Section I concludes with the information that he keeps his candle burning longer than the others, and Section 2 ends with the extinguishing of his candle.

Section 3

The sections of Part II that follow, open up and develop from this closely circumscribed section which conveys a sense of one night with its darkness, its airs, and its gleams of light. Section 3 begins by referring back to that one night of darkness : 'But what after all is one night ?' To place it in its context of a whole series of succeeding nights, is a perspective of continuous darkness. That perspective is introduced in a simple factual statement : 'Night, however, succeeds night'. To transcend the factual, the image of a pack of cards is introduced. The series of night is a pack of cards relentlessly dealt, which suggests the action of Fortune, the fickle goddess. Evocative fantasy then takes over from the image of the cards. As nights lengthen and darken they are associated with trees : 'autumn trees, ravaged'. The traditional association of autumn with death is at first implied. The associative movement as image on image builds up, continuous as the trees with their ravaged branches are linked with a cathedral, almost casually in a neat transference of imagery, to suggest the glory of those who die in battle :

> **The autumn ravaged as they are, take on the flash of tattered flags kindling in the gloom of cool cathedral** caves

> where gold letters on marble pages describe death in battle and how bones bleach and burn far away in Indian sands.

The tree image, as it is worked out, concludes with a vivid picture of loveliness as the trees gleam in the moonlight, the light of a harvest moon which suggests the other aspect of autumn—its mellow fruitfulness.

After the tree image, the idea of Fortune or a controlling force behind the universe is returned to, but the idea is made more explicit through reference to a person called 'divine goodness'. It is however, the arbitrariness of that controlling power that is emphasised. The emphasis is made through a theatre image which creates the irony of the na me 'divine goodness'.

> It seemed now as if, touched by human penitence and all its toil, divine goodness had parted the curtain and displayed behind it, single, distinct, the hair erect ; the wave falling ; the boat rocking, which, did we deserve them, should be ours always. But alas, divine goodness, twitching the cord draws the curtain ; it does not please him ; he covers his treasures with a drench of hail......

The scene framed in the parting of the curtains is a touching allegorical representation of life. The boat rocking peaceably on the gently falling wave is without reason or explanation shattered by 'a drench of hail'. This is an allegory, too, of what happens to the Ramsay family between the years in which the house in the Hebrides was unvisited by any of them. It is not an allegory of the book as a whole, but the allegory is completed at the end of the book when the boat with the two Ramsay children and their father sails through calm and safe waters to the Lighthouse.

At this point in Section 3, there follows a brief philosophical passage which parallels the suggestion (in Section 2) of the existence of something steadfast. The passage in Section 3 seems to hold the clue to the right interpreting of *To the Lighthouse*, or rather, is a succinct comment on what is presented in the book :

> It seems impossible that their calm should return or that we should ever compose from their fragments a perfect whole or read in the littered pieces the clear words of truth.

The word 'seems' implies that a 'calm' is to be looked for, and that for the onlooker, or the sharer in the experience, there is a 'whole' to be formed or discovered and truth to be reached. This is how Virginia Woolf intends *To the Lighthouse* to be interpreted. Very loosely, as a descriptive comment on the whole, a 'glimpse only' is what is granted to man in life.

It was there in Part I, 'The Window' as 'one of those globed compacted things', and is experienced again in Part III, 'The

Lighthouse'. 'Time Passes' contains the 'fragments' or the 'littered pieces'.

After the hint of the meaning, Section 3 works towards its conclusion in a vivid realistic description of stormy nights. Yet Virginia Woolf does not remain in the 'outer' or purely descriptive for long. The outer takes on symbolic force. So, as 'trees plunge' and the 'sea tosses itself' man finds no 'sharer of his solitude'. The outer scene leads into the landscape of man's inner questioning. But questioning proves vain.

Futility and emptiness reach a climax in the fact of Mrs. Ramsay's death, and stylistically telling is the placing of that final bare fact in a subordinate part of the sentence : 'Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before....' The full emphasis of her death falls, therefore, synthetically on the terrible implication of her death for Mr. Ramsay : 'he stretched his arms out. They remained empty' in a bare image of life's emptiness.

Section 4

Section 4 picks up and develops stylistically and imagistically, the theme of emptiness emphasised at the end of Section 3. A pattern of emptiness is traced, developing, as it were, from Mr. Ramsay's arms to fill the house ; "he stretched his arms out. They remained emptv."

In a strange kind of way, Virginia Woolf suggests the particular shape of the house's emptiness. Mrs. Ramsay had given life to others in a particular form. With her death the life went, but the form remained. This is indicated at first almost humorously in her shoe and clothing : 'these alone kept the human shape'. A beautiful abstract description then points to the inner significance of the disembodied shape :

> So loveliness reigned the stillness, and together made the shape of loveliness itself, a form from which life had parted.

As the description continues, the abstract quality of loveliness takes on the dimension of an allegorical figure whose activity and effectiveness is indicated by an allegorical dance : 'Loveliness and stillness clasped hands in the bedroom.' The questioning 'airs' that still haunt the house are reassured that the form remains. 'Nothing it seemed could break that image'. So it is that 'one fold of the shawl' loosens. The protective covering, in the remaining sections, is shed gradually fold by fold.

Section 5

In Section 5, Mrs. M'cNab begins to clean the house. She forms a parallel, humorous and pathetic at the same time, to the intruding

'airs'. The image of the old and infirm charwoman is created with economy of writing, chiefly through a succession of verbs which suggest weight, bulk and awkwardness, such as : 'lurched, rolled, leered, clutched hauled herself.' Yet through the caricature there emerges in her drab existence a similar kind of life-pattern, though proportions are different :

> It was one long sorrow and trouble, how it was getting up and going to bed again, things......and putting them away again.

Yet she too has had her 'glimpses' :

> as if indeed there twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope.

Section 6

With Section 6, the final verse of the 'elegy', a new technique is used by Virginia Woolf. The slow laboured associative movement of the earlier sections, which grew in depth as image was built on image, gives way to a swifter movement. Time is less closely focussed. The next season, spring, is at once introduced, but with a sense of its bareness and barrenness rather than of its more usual promise of life. Against this ominous background stands the fact that in May Prue Ramsay is married. In only one paragraph the shift is then made from summer to the following spring with an increasing sense of unease which is created through a personification of spring with eyes veiled, having knowledge of sorrow. In the summer Prue Ramsay dies. With a brief reference to the qualities of the seasons : 'the heat of summer' and 'when darkness fell' summer and winter are quickly passed over to point the reader's attention to the next spring, as the lighthouse beam shines 'in the softer light of spring'. In late summer 'ominous sounds' of war are heard, and Andrew Ramsay is killed. A volume of Mr. Carmichael's poems is published the following spring. Section 6, therefore, covers three years and the time scheme is carefully plotted. In those three years the tragic events in the life of the Ramsay family have taken place.

Part II as a whole is experimental, one of Virginia Woolf's most daring experiments with the form or structure of the novel. In structure, the controlling technique used is that of association which creates the impression of a loose, almost haphazard kind of form. Below the surface of this, but moving more to the surface in Section 6, the tighter structure of the time scheme knits the whole together. The sense of the passing of the ten years is created impressionistically rather than by a simple form of chronology. A series of close-ups of particular moments in time brings the whole span of years into focus. The sections analysed form such close-ups. Section 2 describes fully, literally and symbolically, the darkness of one night. Sections 3 to 5 cover first of all the series of nights, and then the series of weeks which forms the dark season of winter. So the sense of time from

Section 2 to Section 5 opens out through a kind of fan-shape representation. In that winter is the one season of intense darkness. Mrs. Ramsay dies. The 'fan' shape opens out further as Section 6 covers the three years, in which Prue and Andrew Ramsay die. The early years in the ten-year span, therefore, are those of the greatest anguish, the darkest. The years that follow are those of the slow recovery, so that in the later sections the intensity is eased to a gradual restoration of peace in the world and to order in the house, and night from being menacing becomes protective.

PART III

THE LIGHTHOUSE

There are two main structural lines to Part III of *To the Lighthouse* : one, the journey of Mr. Ramsay to the Lighthouse, the other Lily's completion of her picture. At the surface or outer level, Lily remains almost static on the lawn. At the surface level Mr. Ramsay sails to the Lighthouse ; Lily's inner journey progressing step by step is accompanying the boat's literal voyage, so that at the end both he and she have 'arrived'. The structure of Part I was almost static because the centre round which all the characters revolved was the seated figure of Mrs. Ramsay in the window. The structure was, therefore, dictated by the surface minimal movement of Mrs. Ramsay. In Part III the main structural line is much simpler. The movement from one place to another, from the bay to the Lighthouse, provides the simple linear form of a journey which is symbolic of inner journeys embarked on. Below the surface, however, the structure is more complex.

Now after a little flagging and hesitation the sails filled and, shrouded in profound silence, she watched the boat take its way with deliberation past the other boats out to sea.

This is a literal description of the scene Lily is pondering on. Mr. Ramsay is sailing out of the bay, past the other boats. It can be read too as a symbolic account of what has in fact just taken place on land, or what might be called the prelude to the sail.

The early morning scene is one of tensions and anger and fear. The chaos is caused at the literal level, first of all because 'Cam was not ready and James was not ready and Nancy had forgotten to order the sandwiches'. Causing it too is Mr. Ramsay's tyranny over the children and his self-pitying call for sympathy which the children resent and which Lily is unable to satisfy. In addition, Nancy does not know what should be sent to the Lighthouse and Lily cannot help her. So Mr. Ramsay, losing his temper, bangs out of the house.

Below this surface chaos, and causing it, is the absence of Mrs. Ramsay, whose gift it was to create an atmosphere or sense of relative stability in the midst of the chaos of life, and who in her practical sense and genuine kindness always knew, for example, the

right gifts for the lighthouse keeper and his son. Or, as Lily expresses it : "The link that usually bound things together had been cut. After the chaos of the little flagging and hesitation the sails filled."

Journey

As Mr. Ramsay sets off on his journey, Lily makes a reflection that seems to be at the same time a very firm and revealing author's comment : "There was no helping Mr. Ramsay on the journey he was going". Together with this hint of the private and solitary nature of Mr. Ramsay's journey, the spiritual nature of which is suggested but not fully revealed or explored, there is too a sense of a joint or family voyage which gives emphasis more specifically to a sense of enterprise, and to Mr. Ramsay's role as leader. Mr. Ramsay's coming to Lily for help in his loneliness and sense of inadequacy, and her being human or womanly inadequacy in face of his needs, belong to and represent a stage in this solitary or private journey. The next stage in that journey comes after Mr. Ramsay has shown his power to revive by shifting out of his self absorption to fix his mind on some ordinary concrete object : his magnificent boots. The newer stage of that 'journey' is reflected in the expression on his face as he leaves the lawn for the bay :

> It seemed as if he had shed worries and ambitions, and the hope of sympathy and the desire for praise, had entered some other region... Tied up with this inner private journey is Mr. Ramsay's leadership 'of the little band', his family. Having entered 'some other region' he is drawn further but in such a way that he must take his children, Cam and James, with him. And where he actually takes them seems to be beyond Lily's power of experiencing.

The distanced image of the little boats in the bay, at the end of Section 4, is followed at once, in Section 5, by the first 'in the boat' stage of the journey. In the 'calm' water of the bay in which progress cannot be made, the inner climate is far from calm. Positions seem to be changed, Mr. Ramsay, or tyranny, now being placed between Cam and James (rather than ahead or in front of them) where he is resented by them both. Psychologically, the two children oppose the expedition, hoping it will fail : "So there they would sit, one at one end of the boat, one at the other, in silence".

The first easing of the strain comes to Mr. Ramsay as the sails catch the wind and the boat speeds out to sea. He finds release in the easy companionship of the old sailor Macalister, as he puffs his pipe and brings 'his voice into tune' with the fisherman's. Macalister tells the story of the previous winter's storm, in which three boats had sunk, which therefore forms a parallel with the darkness and storm of Part II of the book in which three members of the Ramsay family died. Gradually Cam begins to feel proud of her father, feeling less strongly the pull of her pact—for her father at home with

the fisherman is no longer a tyrant—and symbolically asks herself :

> Where are we going ?

Private and Family Journeys

Another stage of both the private and the family journeys occurs as Mr. Ramsay draws attention to the island in the distance, and to their house on it. For Cam, distancing experience brings a freedom from the thing in the distance which is the past :

> Already the little distance they had sailed had put them far from it (their house) and given it the changed look, the composed look of something receding in which one has no longer any part.

Cam looks back on the past, not with love, but with a sense of joy that a complete break can now be made with it. It is, for her, unreality. Mr. Ramsay, on the other hand, looks back on the moments intensely lived there, and described in Part I of *To the Lighthouse*, but for him that represents reality. Gradually, as he recalls his wife, he becomes more aware of Cam, her personality, he becomes more aware of himself, his weakness, his egoism and heroically moves another stage further in his private journey.

He clutched his fingers and determined that his voice and his face and all the quick expressive gestures which had been at his command making people pity him and praise him all these years should subdue themselves. With this and his gentler manner, Cam realises that 'no-one attracted her more' but the remembrance of his tyranny over their childhood still causes some resistance to his present appeal.

The next stage of the family journey occurs when the boat, symbolically comes to a standstill half way between the island and the Lighthouse. The wind drops and the sun shines hotly. There is a sense that with the sun 'everybody seemed to come very close together, and to feel each other's presence' which recalls the lighting of the candles at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party.

At this half-way point James recalls intense moments from the past, in particular the elaborate scene, from Part I of the book, in which his demanding father interrupted his being with his mother, in order to ask for sympathy and reassurance for himself, and also his father's assertiveness about the weather and not being able to go to the Lighthouse. By rekindling through this recollection his original hate and anger at his father, and in recalling too his own symbol for it—the striking of his father to the heart—James now comes to realise that he does not in fact hate his father, but only something in him : his tyranny or despotism.

Moving off on the final stage of the journey, Cam, recalling

her father's gentler protective moments from the past, and seeing him now in the boat, contentedly absorbed in his book, is able no longer to resist her father less. She sees how alike James and his father in fact are, and what he and his father have in common. James' resistance is completely removed when Mr. Ramsay praises him for steering 'like a born sailor'.

The end of Mr. Ramsay's journey is only suggested or implied. He too seems to be as successful as his children laying the ghosts of the past.

What do you want? they both wanted to ask. They both wanted to say, ask us anything and we will give it to you. But he did not ask them anything. He sat and looked at the island and—he might be thinking, we perished each alone, or he might be thinking, I have reached it, I have found it, but he said nothing.

Perhaps the most remarkable change of all that has come over Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James, is a kind of maturing sense that each of them has somehow come into his or her own, helped, and now no longer tied, by the past they had to return to. So there is a sense of renewal and a dropping of his tyranny as Mr. Ramsay leaps lightly 'like a young man' on to the rock. Setting out in the early morning Lily had seen the children as : 'still young enough to be drawn acquiescent in their father's wake, obediently'....Now they seem to be old enough to rise up simply to follow him gladly of their own accord : 'and they both rose to follow him as he sprang...on to the rock'.

Lily's Journey

The structure of Mr. Ramsay's journey has required a detailed analysis because of the multiple journeys involved in the actual sail to the Lighthouse. From time to time Lily's 'journey' has also been referred to. It is perhaps more complex in a different kind of way, but simpler to describe because it is one private journey, and because the sailing of the boat to the Lighthouse, which is bound up with her vision, has already been discussed from Mr. Ramsay's point of view.

Lily's journey is a growth in awareness, a long and complex process. Its first stage, in which she realised her own human inadequacy in face of Mr. Ramsay's needs, had already been discussed. The next stage begins as the trio sets off for the boat. Lily, the onlooker, the artist, is conscious of what could be called the subject-object division within herself, and which is inevitably that of the artist struggling with something he or she is trying to encompass or capture in order to re-create it on his or her canvas. The artist's journey is one from division or separateness to one of wholeness in which, as it were, the thing glimpsed and the glimpses are one and from their oneness there emerges the work of art on the canvas. This seems to be the 'journey' that Lily Briscoe takes.

At first :

> She felt curiously divided, as if one part of her were drawn out there...the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly, here on the lawn.

At the end of the book with a moment's clarity of vision she can fill the centre of her picture so that with exhausted satisfaction she can acknowledge : 'I have had my vision'.

With that 'journey', and what is in fact the substance of her painting, there is a very complex inner journey of a search for one's self and working together with that, a coming to some wider grasp on life's significance. It involves at the same time a kind of summing up and assessment of the Ramsays and their life. Structuring the whole of Lily's random recollections from the past is the careful plotting of stages in the painting of her picture.

First there is the uncompromising blank sheet and then the first stroke of her brush that calls for the agony and courage of commitment. From that first stroke there develops a series of strokes which form a 'dancing rhythmical movement'. As the lines settle they enclose a space. After the first series of deliberate strokes is accomplished, another series is begun, but it is painted by some kind of force beyond the painter : 'so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current'. With this experience in which Lily withdraws from the outer world around her :

> her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues.

The series of memories is then recalled. Haunting or pervading them all is the subtle power of Mrs. Ramsay. A reliving of an intense moment from the past in which that power fostered a moment of real and felt friendship with Charles Tansley, leads Lily to paint that experience into her picture.

And she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there. At the same time she seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach...And Lily, painting steadily, felt if a door had opened, and one went in......

Exploring more fully her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay, and the value of the kind of life Mrs. Ramsay created around her, there comes a point at which something else from the past and the present is required to complete her vision and her paintings.

Mr. Ramsay's arrival, rounding off for Lily his past with the demands it had made on Mrs. Ramsay, and on herself, is a point of arrival for Lily, as if he is now somehow freed both from his need

for Mrs. Ramsay and also from the substitute for it that Lily might have provided. With her sense of giving something to him as he arrives at the Lighthouse, he completes, or achieves, that sense of wholeness that is both the end of her journey and also of her picture. 'Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was—her picture'.

Conclusion

The quotation from *A Writer's Diary* heading this chapter indicates how the author came to grips with a structural problem that the third part of *To the Lighthouse* created for her. It was the question of the ending. A problem of unity is created because there are two centres of interest, namely, Lily and Mr. Ramsay, or Lily's painting and Mr. Ramsay's journey to the Lighthouse. In reading the final version of *To the Lighthouse* it is obvious that Virginia Woolf was correct in judging the final moment of intensity, or sense of the 'intensity of the moment', to be Mr. Ramsay's arrival at the rock. The brief final section given to Lily is a kind of epilogue. It is, first of all, a final comment by the perceptive on-looker. It is, also, of course, more in that there is a sense of which Lily goes through Mr. Ramsay's journey :

> 'He must have reached it', said Lily Briscoe aloud, feeling suddenly completely tired out.

It seems too that for Lily, Mr. Carmichael has taken on the role of a Sea God, or figure of Fate : as she stood looking out to sea, spreading his hands 'he was surveying tolerantly, compassionately, their final destiny'. Although, therefore, the final scene takes place on the lawn, it is on Mr. Ramsay's reaching the Lighthouse that both Mr. Carmichael and Lily fix their gaze and their thoughts. A sense of the unity of the two scenes is also achieved symbolically through Lily's picture. The bay and the lawn, or the sea and land, seem to be reduced to a kind of symbolic essence, to, that is, their essential or representative colours. So Lily looking at her canvas sees :

> with all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something.

This is not the whole of Lily's picture, but is that aspect of it, together with the fact that with the end of Mr. Ramsay's journey Lily is able to complete her painting, that creates the fusion and artistic unity of Part III of *To the Lighthouse*.

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Major Characters in To the Lighthouse

(1) MR. RAMSAY

An Intellectual

Mr. Ramsay, the head of the Ramsay family, is the second most important character in *To the Lighthouse.* He is an intellectual, whose chief vocation is reading and writing. He has a number of books to his credit. He is one of the leading literary figures of his time. Virginia Woolf tells us that his mind was splendid ; very few people in the whole of England had the range and subtlety of mind that he possessed. Philosophy was his chief object of pursuit. In an answer to a question about the content of his father's books, Andrew replies, "Subject and object and the nature of reality." A profound philosophical problem indeed. It requires mental faculties of the highest order to pursue it.

The significance of what Mr. Ramsay is doing in his books can be seen from the fact that the problem of subject and object and the nature of reality works its way through the novel on three levels : human relations, metaphysics, and aesthetics.

Lack of Success

Inspite of his being an eminent man of letters of his time, Mr. Ramsay is not altogether successful. His last book, for instance, was far from a success. He has a growing sense of failure, and this makes him considerably unhappy. He ponders over his lack of success, tries to rationalise it, but at the end, remains unsatisfied. He says that only one in a million achieves total success. Such a man comes once in an age. Normally people have to be content with partial success ; that is his position too. Perhaps the younger generation does not hold him in very high esteem. If total success means going on to the last letter of the alphabet, he seems to be stuck at the letter 'Q'.

Need for Sympathy

One thing about Mr. Ramsay, which the novelist emphasises

over and over again and through the medium of more than one character, is his insatiable hunger for sympathy. He wants to be assured that he is the circle of life, that he needed, that he is not a failure, that his literary output is significant. This claim for sympathy he makes the most on his wife, who has to go out of her way to reassure him. He looks to be begging for sympathy—a pathetic figure, indeed. He wanted his barrenness to be made fertile and all the rooms of the house made "full of life". Mr. Ramsay said that Mr. Tansley considered him to be the greatest metaphysician of the world. But he must have more than that ; he must be assured that he was needed all over the world.

Lily thinks that Mr. Ramsay had never given anything to any body ; he was always a taker ; Mrs. Ramsay had always given him ; so will she herself be forced to give him. Of course, Mrs. Ramsay honestly thought that her husband was a genius. There was something truly exceptional about him compared to the normal run of people around. She admired him, though she was not a little unhappy on account of his cringing nature. That greatly embarrassed her. He demanded sympathy not only from Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, but from his children also. Thus the author says that he made demands on Cam.

Only when he is leaving for the lighthouse, thinks Lily Briscoe, does he shed the desire for praise and hope of sympathy. He seemed to her to have entered some other region.

A Realist

When the book opens, Mr. Ramsay is 62. He is a realist who neither has illusion about life nor can he tolerate anybody else harbouring illusions. And in shattering these illusions, he was ruthless. When his wife said that the wind might change direction and that they might still be able to go to the lighthouse, the irrationality of her remarks greatly irritates him. The folly of the women's mind particularly enraged him, says Virginia Woolf. "He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered ; and now she flew in the face of facts, made the children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step." His intention, naturally, was that the children should understand the grim realities of life, face up to the facts, rather than being lulled into complacency.

Egotistical, Tyrant

This excessive concern for realism is, perhaps, one of the things that explain the element of "tyranny" in his character of which the children particularly and repeatedly complain. The children, particularly James, did not like him, for he made sarcastic remarks and had a strange joy in debunking them and in "pouring ridicule" on his wife, who, the children thought, was infinitely superior to him. He had some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgment.

He never changed a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure and convenience of any living mortal. This, the children resented. He wanted them to know that life was difficult, facts uncompromising; and life needed courage, truth and power to endure.

James and Cam take their father to be an absolute tyrant and have formed a joint defence pact, so to say, against him. They have decided to fight against him jointly and not to yield him any ground when they are going to the lighthouse. James was steering the boat. He knew that his father would be sharp and curt with him, if he forgot and the sails shivered. He had weighed down the children with his authority and gloom. So great is the children's sense of persecution, that James, as he steered the boat, thought wishfully of escaping and being relieved of the burden of life.

He scolded Cam for he could not understand the state of mind of anyone. She was frightened and vague. He thought women were always vague. His blindness and tyranny were intolerable to Cam. These things had ruined his children and raised bitter storms so that even now she would sometimes wake in the night trembling with some command of his. James was so angry that he thought that if his father said something unreasonable, he would take a knife and pass it through his heart.

Eccentricities

There are also developing in Mr. Ramsay, what might be called, the eccentricities of the academic such as reciting aloud to himself the acting out of a role, which cause much embarrassment to William Bankes and Lily Briscoe. Yet outweighing obvious weaknesses are the qualities of genuineness and authority that can inspire confidence.

For if he said a thing, it would make all the difference. He went to the heart of things. He cared about fishermen and their wages. He could not sleep for thinking of them. It was altogether different when he spoke.

Though Virginia Woolf has tried to trace the tender, more human side of Mr. Ramsay, what strikes the reader most, is his weakness and his failure. The tenderness is glimpsed in Mr. Ramsay's response to his wife's sad and remote expression, and he felt, as he passed, that he could not protect her and when he reached the hedge, he was sad.

The desire to protect is what wins Cam back to him in the sail to the lighthouse :

> Now I can go on thinking whatever I like, and I shall not fall over a precipice or be drowned, for there he is keeping his eye on me, she thought.

(2) MRS. RAMSAY

The Central Figure

Mrs. Ramsay is by far the most important character of the novel. She is the central figure in the first part of *To the Lighthouse*. She providés structurally and psychologically a cohesive force which gives a sense of unity and meaning to the lives of people around her. She is the centre, around which action and movement are built. The window gives access to the centre. It is as if a slow-moving camera were swinging alternately from outside the window to the drawing room.

The novel opens with the focus on Mrs. Ramsay, the centre. She is sitting at the window which links the lawn with the indoors. First to come to the centre are Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley. Mrs. Ramsay's impressions about these men, as they invade Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness, fill out the scene for the reader. Similarly, Mr. Bankes and Lily Briscoe come back from their walk to the lawn, they too come again within Mrs. Ramsay's range of vision. Thus there is a simple transition back to the centre. Everybody seems to be revolving round her.

Mr. Ramsay is dependent upon his wife as nobody else is. Sympathy and understanding from her are dire necessities of his life. That is why he repeatedly comes to her to be reassured. As he reflects on his life and achievements, he comes to acknowledge his dependence on his wife and her possession of a power and strength different in kind from his own.

Her role as a great unifying force comes out most prominently at the dinner party towards the end of Part I of the novel. There she performs the duty not only of connecting various individuals to each other, but has also to engage herself with some of them. By a look, she compels Lily to be considerate to Charles Tansley. As a result of this intervention, Tansley is brought out of his isolation and gets the attention he requires in order to feel at ease. Mr. Carmichael is brought out of himself by the beauty of the bowl of fruit at the centre of the table. Once the party has been set into motion, Mrs. Ramsay can sit back and be an onlooker for a moment. But she alone can set the party in motion.

A Match-Maker

Closely linked with her role of bringing people together, is her interest in match-making. At a number of places in the novel, she shows interest in match-making. Minta Paul affair is a case in point. She thought that it was her duty to see that they got married. She thought she was responsible for Minta's welfare and could not see her going about loose. That she was the force behind this marriage becomes clear when, after the marriage fails, Paul accuses Mrs. Ramsay of having brought him to this unhappy position.

Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay had thought of Lily Briscoe entering into matrimonial alliance more than once even in case of a man like Charles Tansley, whom Lily does not like ; Mrs. Ramsay tried that she should break the barrier with him. This Lily recalls in the third part of the book. This excessive interest in other people's affairs is, however, not welcomed by the people concerned.

Her Good Manners

Mrs. Ramsay in her veins has the blood of an Italian family, whose daughters, scattered about the English drawing rooms in the nineteenth century had lisped so charmingly. All her wit and beaming, all her good manners, came from them and not from the sluggish English and the cold Scotch. It is she who is able to assemble at the summer-house such a large number of quests, people who are often different from one another. It is with her good manners, her care and her presence of mind, that she is able to hold the circle together.

Kind-Hearted and Considerate

Mrs. Ramsay is full of the milk of human kindness. She feels very greatly for the poor and the unfortunate. This is most clearly brought out by the earnestness and effort with which she knits stocking for the poor lighthouse-keeper's son. She knows that the lighthouse-keeper leads a lonely life, and it would be a matter of some cheer to him to receive something by way of a present. So great is her consideration for the poor boy that she almost identifies him with her own son James. Ten years later, when Mr. Ramsay takes a brown parcel to the lighthouse, he is only paying homage to his dead wife.

She has the greatest consideration for even the small children. Here, as in so many other things, she is in sharp contrast to her husband. Mr. Ramsay brutally shatters young James' hope of going to the lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay knows that this will hurt and shock James. She, therefore, not only does not share her husband's cruelty, but positively remonstrates with him and Mr. Tansley for their lack of understanding and sympathy for the children. Even when she herself, perhaps, knows that the trip to the lighthouse may not come off, she refrains from discouraging James. Mr. Ramsay is angry with her for building up false hopes. He is unable to appreciate that she does not want to dishearten the child.

Whereas the children have downright hatred for their father, for their mother their feelings are one of affection. There seems to be considerable understanding and mutual sympathy between them. Thus, inspite of Mr. Ramsay's superiority of intellect, James considers his mother infinitely superior to him. She is so much attached to the children that she does not want James or Cam to grow older. She thought that the loss of childhood was irreparable. She was happy carrying a baby in her arm. Life had eternal

problems of sufferings, death and poverty. But inspite of all this, she wanted people to marry and have children.

This theme of poverty, death and sufferings occurs at a number of places in the novel, where Mrs. Ramsay is reflecting on life and its meaning. The kind-hearted lady is greatly moved by the spectacle of misery, suffering and poverty around her. Though the purpose of the novel is not to solve these problems, not even to focus attention on them, the central figure unmistakably draws attention towards them, for she is greatly moved by human sufferings.

Her Charm

She is a dominating person. Her guests, her husband said, were her great admirers. "Indeed, she had the whole of other sex under her protection. Towards her, their attitude was trustful and reverential." Again and again we get a mention of her beauty. One might wonder as to what kind of beauty an old woman, the mother of no fewer than eight children, can have, which not only keeps her husband enthralled but greatly impresses others as well. For one thing, her age not withstanding, she has considerable physical charm. But that alone could not explain her attractiveness and appeal. She has other graces too. She is very polite and hospitable. As Virginia Woolf says, "she could not bear incivility to her guests, to young men in particular, who were poor as church mice, exceptionally able."

She is a practical nurse and much concerned with the improvement of social conditions. Like Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway*, she can create moments of unity that remain intact in the memory, "affecting one almost like a work of art."

Mrs. Ramsay is projected more as a symbol, though it is not that she is not sufficiently individualised. She is never called by her first name as Clarissa Dalloway, for instance. Despite this intentional indefiniteness, Mrs. Ramsay emerges as a human being of great appeal, though the facts about her are symbolic as well as literal.

Lily's Tribute

Mrs. Ramsay inspired feelings of completeness and harmony in Lily Briscoe, which make Lily fall in love with the place. This Lily admits in Part III of the novel. Lily is haunted by Mrs. Ramsay long after the latter has died. When the former sits back painting, some white thing was seen in the room. The old horror came back and she cried, "Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay." She could imagine Mrs. Ramsay sitting on the table. She was irresistible, Lily thought. Always, she had her way in the end.

Not only Lily, she cast a spell on everybody who came in

contact with her. Indeed, her charms were irresistible. She was, of course, not free from some of the weaknesses of the female sex. She could, for instance, be easily flattered. In fact at one place, the novelist goes to the extent of saying that often her good deeds were done with the powerful desire of being praised, being hailed and held up as a model of civility and goodness.

(3) LILY BRISCOE

Her Independence

Lily Briscoe is a complex figure. When the novel opens she is thirty four. She is a spinster disinterested in ordinary sexual attachment. She thought that the unmarried women missed the best part of life. She had her father, her home, but she liked to be herself. Mrs. Ramsay thought her "dear Lily" was a fool on this account. But Lily laughed it all away for she thought that Mrs. Ramsay did not understand her.

Her Love

Though not interested in ordinary sex relationships, she is nonetheless capable of violent outbursts of love. She loved William Bankes and his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life. William Bankes had said that she was astonishingly beautiful. But, she thinks, beauty has its penalty ; it stifles life.

When Paul and Minta came to Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party and it looks certain that they were engaged to be married, the emotion and the aberration of love came over Lily too. She felt herself very inconspicuous by Paul's side. He was glowing and burning ; she was aloof and sentimental ; he bound for adventure, she moved to the shore ; he was launched, she was solitary and left out.

When Lily asks him something, Paul simply laughs. His chuckle, thought Lily, meant that he did not care for her. It upset her. As a reaction to this slight, came to her the thought that she would not marry and undergo degradation. She would rather go on painting. Living with Ramsays gave such a complexity of emotions. Lily thought that love was so beautiful, so exciting that she trembled on the verge of it. Love is, at the same time, the stupidest and the most barbaric of all human passions that turns a nice young man into a bully. She is, of course, referring to Paul here.

Inspite of all this, reflected Lily, men have always loved but women have said that there was nothing more tedius, more puerile and more inhuman than love.

Though she faded under Minta's glow and looked more inconspicuous at the party, Mrs. Ramsay thought that of the two ladies (Lily and Minta), Lily at forty would be better. There was

something in Lily which Mrs. Ramsay liked, but she somehow feared that no man would marry her unless he was much older than she was. It could well be Mr. Bankes. He seemed to care for her since his wife's death. But it was not love. Mrs. Ramsay wished that William married Lily. They had so many things in common.

The Painter

Lily Briscoe is a devoted painter all through the book ; she is hard put to complete her picture. She was not getting it right. She could not bring on the canvas what she vaguely thought and wanted to paint. She perhaps did not quite know what she wanted to make of it—how to connect the mass on the right hand with that on the left. That is, she was getting a whole host of hazy ideas, which she could not grasp and frame on her canvas. There was an empty space, which had to be filled and she did not know how to fill it. She might fill the vacancy in the foreground, she thought, by an object, by moving a tree in the front, or bring the lines of the branch across. But she is not able to decide. If she carried out the proposed changes, the danger was that the unity of the whole might be destroyed.

Very often she despairs at her inability to complete her picture in the midst of people and thoughts. She decides with a shudder to resume her work. Again and again, she bends her energies to solve her problem. But to no effect. There seemed to be a certain inadequacy which did not let her put herself heart and soul into the picture. But this does not detract from her dedication to painting. Perhaps nobody else in her position would have persevered with the picture for ten years and more.

Lily thought that a brush was the only dependable ally in a world of chaos, strife and ruin and she should not trifle with it. She was depressed that at forty four, she was wasting her time at the Ramsay household. Mrs. Ramsay was dead and she thought, she should not have come to the summer-house. She was feeling unable to a thing when there was some disturbance, particularly when Mr. Ramsay was around. He demanded sympathy and caused embarrassment. He seemed to say to her that she would not touch her canvas unless she had given to him what he wanted. So long as he was near her, she could not paint.

It is only after she is able to sympathise with Mr. Ramsay, after he has left for the lighthouse that the deadlock in her painting is broken. Onset of the feelings of love and sympathy releases her creative powers. With a curious physical sensation, she makes her first decisive stroke. The brush descended on the canvas a second time and then, a third. Pausing and flickering, she attained a rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the movement and strokes another. And all were related. So appeared lines on the canvas that enclosed the nasty vacant spot.

As she painted, one got an idea of a creative artist at work. She loses consciousness of the outer world and as she lost consciousness of her name and personality, and of whether Mr. Carmichael or somebody else was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depth scenes and names and sayings and memories and ideas like a fountain. She seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay when they had all gone to the beach ten years ago. She stepped back to get her canvas in perspective. Painting was a difficult thing to do. Only when one had cast off all mental reservations, all irritants, and had melted with sympathy and love, could one catch the vision on the canvas or produce any other worthwhile work of art.

The Summing Up

Lily is at first presented to the reader in appearance, and by what she is doing and as she is seen through Mrs. Ramsay's eyes.

With her little chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry ; one could not take her painting seriously, but she was an independent little creature.

Appropriate to her role of an onlooker, she is at first glimpsed symbolically standing on the edge of the lawn, painting. Her aloofness or remoteness is further symbolised by her fear lest anyone other than Mr. Bankes should see her picture. External details that reflect particular aspects of her character are noted by William Bankes too. She said that his shoes were excellent. He approves of Lily's good sense and practical nature which outweighs for him the lack of that kind of flare that makes Minta Doyle, for example, at once so attractive and dazzling a personality.

Weighed and assessed against Mrs. Ramsay and the life of the Ramsay family, Lily sees herself and her life as being so much smaller and less significant by comparison. Yet, accepting this, Lily stands her ground for independence and her own kind of life.

Lily's habit of thought is largely pictorial which is what one might accept in a painter. Her thoughts are often formed into images. An illustration of this is the way in which the kitchen table, used by Andrew as an illustrative detail to explain to her his father's work, dogs her mind, developing into a kind of surrealistic fantasy :

> So she always saw, when she thought of Mr. Ramsay's work, a scrubbed kitchen table. It lodged now in the fork of a pear tree. For they had reached the orchard and with a painful effort of concentration, she focussed her mind not upon the silver bossed bark of the tree, or upon its fish-shaped leaves, but upon a phantom kitchen table-grained and knotted.

22

Minor Characters in To the Lighthouse

(1) CHARLES TANSLEY

Sycophant

Of the lesser characters in the novel, Charles Tansley, the sycophant, is representative of the young men who, Mrs. Ramsay notes, parody her husband.

Unpopular

The character of Mr. Tansley is indicated, to begin with, largely through the reaction of the Ramsay children to him. To Andrew, he is a sarcastic brute. The unpleasantness is somehow figured outwardly, so that the children see him all hump and hollow. He is outside their interests. In a masterly manner Virginia Woolf shows, however, that it is not in fact things about Charles Tansley that one dislikes, but the man himself revealed through his attitude and conversation. He would, for example, twist conversations or enjoyable occasions until he has turned the whole thing round and made it somehow reflect himself and disparate them.

Contrast with Mr. Ramsay

It is worthwhile noting here the basic contrast with Mr. Ramsay, in that whereas it is realized that it is not Mr. Ramsay as a person but only something in him that is hateful, Charles Tansley is, in fact, hateful himself. The contrast between the two men is there morally, intellectually and in character traits, so that Charles Tansley forms a perfect foil to Mr. Ramsay. He forms a foil, too, to Mrs. Ramsay in that whereas she might twist a fact in order not to disappoint others, he, on the other hand, can twist things in order to reflect himself. So intensely self-centred and assertive is Charles Tansley that his power to irritate can reach the point of destruction. This is suggested by the remark : "until he put them on edge somehow with his acid way of peeling the flesh and blood of everything he was not satisfied."

It is Mrs. Ramsay's compassion that offers the reader an

explanation of Mr. Tansley's attitude and behaviour. He tells her of his hard working-class background and behaviour : "It was a large family, nine brothers and sisters, and his father a working-man. He himself had paid his own way since he was thirteen. Often he went without a greatcoat in winter."

Social Maladjustment

Mr. Tansley's chief problem in staying with the Ramsays is that he is socially out of his elements. It is most acutely felt in his unease at the dinner party. Yet his unpleasantness goes far deeper than social inadequacy. Resentment has so eaten into him that even when he has achieved real success, he is unable to be at ease. He had got his fellowship, he had married and lived at Golder's Green and yet he is unable to shed his feelings of bitterness. This is skilfully and economically conveyed in Lily's recollections of hearing him speak :

> She had gone one day into a hall and heard him speaking during the war. He was denouncing something. He was condemning somebody. He was preaching brotherly love.

The perversity is the more pointed through the irony of the brief detached account.

All this notwithstanding, Mr. Tansley is a person of scholarly pursuits and perhaps felt superior to others. He felt very rough, isolated and lonely. He knew that everybody despised him. He was not prepared to make a fool of himself. When Lily crossed him, he wished that he could say something that would prove to Mrs. Ramsay that he was not just a dry prig.

(2) CARMICHAEL

A Presence

Mr. Carmichael is in the book more as a presence. He is not involved as others are except in his love for Andrew, the young man of so much promise who is killed by an exploding shell. The sense of his non-involvement is artistically convincing since he takes opium. He, as a poet and as an artistic figure, forms a parallel to Lily Briscoe. He produced his volume of poems, significantly in the dark years of the war. Lily produces her picture. At the end of the book, he stands on the edge of the lawn with Lily, and there is a realization that he too, like Lily, has seen and understood the things around.

His Career

Mrs. Ramsay said that Mr. Carmichael should have been a philosopher, but he had an affair with some girl, made an unfortunate early marriage and went to India. He translated some poetry and taught Persian, but all this came to nothing. And now, as they saw him, he was lying on the lawn.

An Unhappy Man

He took opium. The Ramsay children said he had stained his beard yellow with it. He was an unhappy man who came to them every year as an escape. Mrs. Ramsay felt that he did not trust her. His wife had undone him. She had turned him out of the house, because he was unclean and had the tiresomeness of an old man, with nothing in the world to do. He had to ask for money to buy tobacco. Mrs. Ramsay was doing all that she possibly could do for him. There was a sunny room given to him ; the children liked him, and she went out of the way to be friendly to him. But still he shrank from her and this hurt her.

Mr. Carmichael was well-versed in the philosophy of Locke, Hume and Berkley. He was some kind of an authority on the French Revolution. But he had not been able to achieve in life what he would have liked to achieve. So he would rather hide his true feelings. For this concealment, he would appear distasteful to Lily and Mr. Bankes, who wonder why he should need to hide things, and why a man who is brave in thought should be timid in life. He was venerable and laughable at one and the same time.

The Successful Poet

The war revived people's interest in poetry, and when Mr. Carmichael brought out his volume, it had an unexpected success.

He was an inscrutable old man with his yellow beard, his poetry, his puzzles sailing secretly through the world. Lily wanted to ask him a number of questions on life, on death, about Mrs. Ramsay. She knew he could answer her questions. He was, obviously, looked up as a learned, if not exactly a wise man.

After the publication of his volume of poems, he was growing famous. His book had been received well. There was in him now a lot of interest in life. But, paradoxically enough, he still wanted to remain aloof. He was still awkward at the dinner table.

Relation with Lilv

Mrs. Ramsay thought, and Lily recalls it after Mrs. Ramsay's death, that she (Lily) would marry Mr. Carmichael. She migh t have told him that she would marry him. Time after time the s ame thing had passed between them, and the proposal could not be made. She was with her impulses and quickness, he with his shudder and gloom. He would hang stealthily around the place where she sat writing letters and talking. She even took care to avoid him and often pretended that she had not seen him. But it is with him that she goes out for walks.

(3) MR. BANKES

A Good Fellow

Mr. Bankes was without a wife or a child. He lived for science. Lily thought he was a good fellow compared to Mr. Ramsay, who, according to Lily Briscoe, was egotistical and tyrannical. Bankes was a great man. But Mr. Ramsay had in him some fiery unworldliness, which Mr. Bankes lacked. He loved dogs and children.

An Unhappy Man

But the truth was that he could not enjoy family life. He thought that it was not quite desirable to go on bearing pain in the world. He would ponder over the meaning of life and the purpose of living. The best way to avoid pain and fear of haunting questions was, he thought, to be occupied. He finds at times difficult to converse with people. He had to make some effort to bring himself to talk to Mrs. Ramsay when he was sitting by her side.

When at the dinner party men talk of wages and unemployment and of other impersonal matters, it was a great relief to William Bankes, for private life was being extremely disagreeable to him. He engaged himself with Mr. Tansley and they discussed politics.

Contrast with Mr. Ramsay

Unlike Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Bankes does not care whether his work would last or not. He knew that there were changes of taste in literature, and thought that Mr. Ramsay should not be unnecessarily worried about the future. He was for enjoyment at the present moment. His integrity seemed to be quite sound to Mrs. Ramsay. She thought he was not unduly bothered. As against him, Mr. Ramsay needed continual assurance that his work would ast.

23

Treatment of Time in To the Lighthouse

Measuring of Mrs. Ramsay's Consciousness

Another stylistic peculiarity to be observed in our text—though one that is closely and necessarily connected with the "multipersonal representation of consciousness"—has to do with the treatment of time. That there is something peculiar about the treatment of time in modern narrative literature is nothing new ; several studies have been published on the subject. These were primarily attempts to establish a connection between the pertinent phenomena and contemporary philosophical doctrines or trends—undoubtedly a justifiable undertaking and useful for an appreciation of the community of interests and inner purposes shown in the activity of many of our contemporaries. It was remarked earlier that the act of measuring the length of the stocking and the speaking of the words related to it must have taken much less time than an attentive reader who tries not to miss anything will require to read the passage—even if we assume that a brief pause intervened between the measuring and the kiss of reconciliation on James' forehead. However, the time the narration takes is not devoted to the occurrence itself (which is rendered rather tersely) but to interludes. Two long excursuses are inserted, whose relations in time to the occurrence which frames them seem to be entirely different. The first excursus, a representation of what goes on in Mrs. Ramsay's mind while she measures the stocking (more precisely, between the first absent-minded and the second sharp order to James to hold his leg still) belongs in time to the framing occurrence and it is only the representation of it which takes a greater number of seconds and even minutes than the measuring—the reason being that the road taken by consciousness is sometimes traversed far more quickly than language is able to render it, if we want to make ourselves intelligible to a third person, and that is the intention here. What goes on in Mrs. Ramsay's mind in itself contains nothing enigmatic ; these are ideas which arise from her daily life and may well be called normal—her secret lies deeper, and it is only when the switch from the open windows to the Swiss maid's words comes, that something happens which lifts the veil a little. On the whole, however, the mirroring of Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness is much more easily comprehensible than the sort of thing we get in such cases from other authors (James Joyce, for example).

Treatment of Time

But simple and trivial as are the ideas which arise one after the other in Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness, they are at the same time essential and significant. They amount to a synthesis of the intricacies of life in which her incomparable beauty has been caught, in which it at once manifests and conceals itself. Of course, writers of earlier periods too occasionally devoted some time and a few sentences to telling the reader what at a specific moment passed through their characters' mind—but for such a purpose they would hardly have chosen so accidental an occasion as Mrs. Ramsay's looking up, so that, quite involuntarily, her eyes fall on the furniture. Nor would it have occurred to them to render the continuous rumination of consciousness in its natural and purposeless freedom. And finally they would not have inserted the entire process between two exterior occurrences so close together in time as the two warnings to James to keep still (both of which, after all, take place while she is on the point of holding the unfinished stocking to his leg); so that, in a surprising fashion unknown to earlier periods, a sharp contrast results between the brief span of time occupied by the exterior event and the dreamlike wealth of a process of consciousness which traverses a whole subjective universe. These are the characteristic and distinctively new features of the technique; a chance occasion releasing process of consciousness; a natural and even, if you will, a naturalistic rendering of those processes in their peculiar freedom, which is neither restrained by a purpose nor directed by a specific subject of thought; elaboration of the contrast between "exterior" and "interior" time. The three have in common what they reveal of the author's attitude; James Joyce submits, much more than was done in earlier realistic works, to the random contingency of real phenomena; and even though he winnows and stylizes the material of the real world—as of course he cannot help doing—he does not proceed rationalistically, nor with a view to bringing a continuity of exterior events to a planned conclusion. In Virginia Woolf's case the exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time (and still today in many instances) inner movements preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant exterior happenings.

Treatment of Time and Place

The temporal relation between the second excursus and the framing occurrence is of a different sort: its content (the passage on the tear, the things people think about Mrs. Ramsay, the telephone conversation with Mr. Bankes and his reflections while watching the building of the new hotel) is not a part of the framing occurrence either in terms of time or of place. Other times and places are in question; it is an excursus of the same type as the story of the origin of Odysseus' scar. Even from that, however, it is different in structure. In the Homer passage the excursus was linked to the scar which Euryclea touches with her hands, and although the moment at which the touching of the scar occurs is one of high

and dramatic tension, the scene nevertheless immediately shifts to another clear and luminous present, and this present seems actually designed to cut off the dramatic tension and cause the entire foot-washing scene to be temporarily forgotten. In Virginia Woolf's passage, there is no question of any tension. Nothing of importance in a dramatic sense takes place; the problem is the length of the stocking. The point of departure for the excursus is Mrs. Ramsay's facial expression: "never did anybody look so sad". In fact several excursuses start from here; three, to be exact. And all three differ in time and place, differ too in definiteness of time and place, the first being situated quite vaguely, the second somewhat more definitely, and the third with comparative precision. Yet none of them is so exactly situated in time as the successive episodes of the story of Odysseus' youth, for even in the case of the telephone scene we have only an inexact indication of when it occurred. As a result it becomes possible to accomplish the shifting of the scene away from the window-nook much more unnoticeably and smoothly than the changing of scene and time in the episode of the scar. In the passage on the tear the reader may still be in doubt as to whether there has been any shift at all. The nameless speakers may have entered the room and be looking at Mrs. Ramsay. In the second paragraph this interpretation is no longer possible, but the "people" whose gossip is reproduced are still looking at Mrs. Ramsay's face—not here and now, at the summer-house window, but it is still the same face and has the same expression. And even in the third part, where the face is no longer physically seen (for Mr. Bankes is talking to Mrs. Ramsay over the telephone), it is nonetheless present to his inner vision; so that not for an instant does the theme (the solution of the enigma Mrs. Ramsay), and even the moment when the problem is formulated (the expression of her face while she measures the length of the stocking), vanish from the reader's memory.

Three Parts of the Excursus

In terms of the exterior event the three parts of the excursus have nothing to do with one another. They have no common and externally coherent development, as have the episodes of Odysseus' youth which are related with reference to the origin of the scar; they are connected only by the one thing they have in common—looking at Mrs. Ramsay, and more specifically at Mrs. Ramsay who, with an unfathomable expression of sadness behind her radiant beauty, concludes that the stocking is still much too short. It is only this common focus which connects the otherwise totally different parts of the excursus; but the connection is strong enough to deprive them of the independent "present" which the episode of the scar possesses. They are nothing but attempts to interpret "never did anybody look so sad"; they carry on this theme, which itself carries on after they conclude; there has been no change of theme at all. In contrast, the scene in which Euryclea recognizes Odysseus is interrupted and divided into two parts by the excursus on the origin of the scar. In our passage, there is no such

clear distinction between two exterior occurrences and between two presents. However insignificant as an exterior event the framing occurrence (the measuring of the stocking) may be, the picture of Mrs. Ramsay's face which arises from it remains present throughout the excursus; the excursus itself is nothing but a background for that picture which seems as it were to open into the depths of time—just as the first excursus, released by Mrs. Ramsay's unintentional glance at the furniture, was an opening of the picture into the depths of consciousness.

The two excursuses then, are not as different as they at first appeared. It is not so very important that the first, so far as time is concerned (and place too), runs its course within the framing occurrence, while the second conjures up other times and places. The times and places of the second are not independent; they serve only the polyphonic treatment of the image which releases it; as a matter of fact, they impress us (as does the interior time of the first excursus) like an occurrence in the consciousness of some observer (to be sure, he is not identified) who might see Mrs. Ramsay at the described moment and whose meditation upon the unsolved enigma of her personality might contain memories of what others (people like Mr. Bankes) say and think about her. In both excursuses we are dealing with attempts to fathom a more genuine, a deeper, and indeed a more real reality; in both cases the incident which releases the excursus appears accidental and is poor in content; in both cases it makes little difference whether the excursuses employ only the consciousness—content, and hence only interior time, or whether they also employ exterior shifts of time. After all, the process of consciousness in the first excursus likewise includes shift of time and scene, especially the episode with the Swiss maid. The important point is that an insignificant exterior occurrence releases ideas and chains of ideas which cut loose from the present of the exterior occurrence and range freely through the depths of time. It is though an apparently simple text revealed its proper content only in the commentary on it, a simple musical theme only in the development-section. This enables us also to understand the close relation between the treatment of time and the "multipersonal representation of consciousness" discussed earlier. The ideas arising in consciousness are not tied to the present of the exterior occurrence which releases them. Virginia Woolf's peculiar technique, as exemplified in our text, consists in the fact that the exterior objective reality of the momentary present which the author directly reports and which appears as established fact—in our instance the measuring of the stocking—is nothing but an occasion (although perhaps not an entirely accidental one). The stress is placed entirely on what the occasion releases, things which are not seen directly by reflection, which are not tied to the present of the framing occurrence which releases them.

24

The Philosophical Framework of To the Lighthouse

A Concern With Life

In her essay on modern fiction Virginia Woolf points out her main concern with what she calls 'life', and with the need to make of the novel a form more adequate for communicating newer and developing insights into and understanding of life :

> Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide.

It is about this thing called 'life' that Virginia Woolf asks her most searching questions in *To the Lighthouse*. The nature of that 'life' or 'reality', as it is presented in the novel, is basically twofold. There is on the one hand a threatening, unpredictable Fate, and on the other the individual human being, creating his own existence, pitied against this unknown and unknowable force, being sometimes conquered by it and sometimes conquering it. It is in the twofold nature of 'life', or in the two kinds of reality, that man struggles to create his own existence, a struggle which reveals alternately the power of human endeavour, and the sense of human inadequacy. Both the reality of the individual human being and that other kind of reality usually hostile, which Mrs. Ramsay calls 'Life' and Nancy calls 'God', and the interaction of the two, are explored by Virginia Woolf in 'significant moments' in, more especially, the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay. When these realities are confronted, questions about their nature are raised. There is in Virginia Woolf's questioning a chronological development. So, for example, in the first part of the book, life appears mysterious and difficult but still beautiful and valuable. Human effort triumphs above it although there are still dark hidden threats. In the second part all security and serenity is destroyed and the questioning becomes more bitter and intense. In Part III, order and value are gradually though painfully restored.

Sitting at the drawing-room window with her son James, Mrs. Ramsay thinks : 'Life...but she did not finish her thought.' Instead of considering life in the abstract, however, she looks closely at her

own life, drawing certain conclusions that are also applicable to life in general or to other individual lives. It is as if life is something outside Mrs. Ramsay which she has to make into 'her life'. Life is something real and something private. It is power to be met, involving the conflict of its trying to overcome her, and she trying to get the better of it. Transactions have to be made. She sees that her life involves a continual effort to resist that 'Life' that is 'terrible, hostile, quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance'. There are, too, external problems to which there is no solution : 'suffering ; death ; the poor.' They are part of the hostility. As Mrs. Ramsay's glance turns to James, her small son who is wholly engrossed in the story she is reading to him, she applies her reflections on life to the lives of her children. Her own life provides the pattern that theirs could take. There will be anguish ; there will be joy. It is a risk, but which by and large she considers to be tremendously worthwhile taking.

When James is carried off to bed, Mrs. Ramsay's reflections move into another phase. In solitude one can be more fully oneself. There energy and vision become more concentrated. Reaching thus to the innermost self, invisible to others, she sees her own being as a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness'. In that region of the self in which one can reach a state of acute awareness, Mrs. Ramsay is able, since she has become both the subject and the object of her own thought, to commit herself to being an 'existing individual'. She is free to decide and to will her own acts. 'This self...was free for the strangest adventures'. There 'the range of experience seemed limitless.' Compared with this reality, the surface self by which one is known to others seems insignificant, 'simply childish'.

This 'inner core of darkness' is free in that it is unlimited by time and space, but also because it is not observed by others, which suggests that people can limit each other's freedom. Some ways of life impose this form of 'limitation' more than others—marriage, for instance, which Mrs. Ramsay has committed herself to because it can satisfy needs that for her are greater than this type of 'freedom', and which Lily Briscoe rejects because her need for this kind of 'freedom' is the greater. Together with the freedom, Mrs. Ramsay finds peace. But most important of all is the 'consciousness' itself, the 'summoning together' which brings a sense of security and stability on which one can rest. Beyond thought and idea is that stillness where things come together and which is a 'triumph over life'.

She calls it 'eternity'. In this 'triumph over life', therefore, Virginia Woolf exalts the reality of the individual being above that other objective reality of life, or Fate, against which man has to struggle.

Contemplation, Solitude and Impersonality

When Mrs. Ramsay is most free, however, most independent in her solitude, she still seeks for support in something outsideherse lf.

She chooses the long steady stroke of the Lighthouse beam. In making herself, her inmost self, the object of her contemplation, she uses this steady light, because it never failed, and was always there, to help her. Thoughts of the Lighthouse, too, help her to rise to the surface of herself, to emerge from her solitude. Basking in its light she realises that overpowering and hostile as life is, she has nevertheless known intense and exquisite happiness. Aware of the incompleteness of her life, she still feels satisfied with it : 'It is enough ! It is enough !'

The 'significant moment' achieved by Mrs. Ramsay involves, therefore, something bigger than the purely personal awareness. It involves other problems such as the relationship between human beings, and the relationship between man and nature which seemed to break down when war brought chaos and the 'mirror was broken'. But the central concept seems to be, however, that man must create his own existence from within his own individual being. It is only within himself that he will find ultimate security, the 'platform of stability' on which he can find rest, peace, and freedom. But he cannot live continually at this level of consciousness. He must live 'outwardly' too. This outer living will be drawn from and sustained by the 'inner core', the 'wedge of darkness'

The outer form that Mrs. Ramsay's life takes is a giving of herself, of her own strength to others. This she achieves by rising from the 'core of darkness' to a summoning up of emotional forces that will attract other people, create harmony among them, or restore them individually to serenity or a sense of security. The first example of the individual to be thus 'restored' by her is her husband, who openly demands sympathy. Responding to his need Mrs. Ramsay rises 'in a rosy-flowered fruit tree with leaves and dancing boughs', making the supreme effort to overcome her being 'so lavish and spent'. After reassuring her husband she collapses : 'one petal closed in another, and the whole fabric fell in exhaustion upon itself'. This is the price she has to pay for her 'successful creation'. It is she herself who has created the need for herself in others. 'They came to her...one wanting this, another that' so that 'she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions'. These constant demands call for the courage to go on, and involve too the anxiety of her wondering if she will always be able to, as well as doubting if after all it is really worth while.

Human Relationships

This influence of one human being upon others, and the question of what human relationships involve, is worked out on a larger scale at the dinner party. The demands that this makes on Mrs. Ramsay are similar to those made on her by her husband during the afternoon. It is now even more difficult to make the effort. Taking her place at the head of the table, Mrs. Ramsay thinks : 'But what have I done with my life ?' There is no answer. Her life seems to be made up of one insignificant action after another. Now it is

ladling out soup. She feels 'past everything, through everything, out of everything.' It is as if life were on one side and she were on the other. Another 'transaction' has to be made. The effort seems too great : 'It is all come to an end, she thought.' The whole responsibility of 'merging, and flowing and creating' rests with her. But she does make the effort which causes the gentle pulse to quicken.

At first she is aware only of an 'infinitely long table with plates and knives', with Charles Tansley ill at ease : Mr. Bankes bored, conscious of the triviality and constant interruptions ; Lily detached and wanting to remain aloof ; and she herself so remote from it all that she wonders if she even has any real affection for her husband. Mrs. Ramsay steers her way through the small talk until with the lighting of the candles 'they all come together'. The table seems less long. Faces seem closer and a change comes over them all, united and happy, in harmony around the table, unease and boredom change to anticipation and expectation. The weight has lifted. She has done it again.

Once Mrs. Ramsay has set things in motion so that 'everything seemed right' and everything seemed possible, and the 'perfect moment' is at its height, she dissociates herself from it. She seeks the 'stability' within the coherence of things, something hard at the centre of the 'flowering and the fleeting' like a ruby, where there is rest and peace. She is upheld by the movement and rhythm of the life she has created around her. And finally, just as she had had to make a supreme effort at the beginning of the party, so at the end she must exert herself to bring the 'moment of successful creation' to a close.

There is, therefore, a correspondence in the progression of the experience of these three 'significant instances' of Mrs. Ramsay's moment of solitude, her husband's coming to her for sympathy, and the dinner party. In the first of these she reaches to the core of her self, the essence of her being. In other two experiences she creates from that 'core', through the powers within herself, a kind of eternal moment. She then reaches the heart of the thing she has created. So, after the party, she tries to preserve its essence, 'the thing that mattered ; to detach it ; separate if off ; clean it of all the emotions and odds and ends of things......' which, she realises, will endure as she, or something of herself, will endure when she is no longer there.

Pattern of Life Reflected in Other Characters

The kind of pattern of experience just traced in detail, a pattern which expresses a basic philosophy or vision of life, can also be discerned, though on a lesser scale, in the life and reflections of the other characters in *To the Lighthouse*. Their lives complete and qualify the central pattern of Mrs. Ramsay's life. So, for example, in a completely different mode, Mr. Ramsay too will look as 'Life', its scope, its problems, its unpredictability. His approach is intellectually and philosophically based, whereas Mrs. Ramsay's is primarily intuitive. His confronting the 'dark of human ignorance'

is another form of the individual's struggle with that unknown and unknowable force outside one which is 'Life'. Looking at 'Life', he asks : 'And what are two thousand years ?...What, indeed, if you look from a mountain-top down the long waste of the ages ?' He is measuring his own 'creation' : 'His own little light would shine, not very brightly, for a year or two' in the long perspective of time. Mrs. Ramsay's perspective is narrower, more personal. She looks at the fifty years of her own life, believing that something of herself, her influence, will live on, 'bound about the heart' of her friends. Her seeking for the core or essence of reality within an experience such as the dinner party is complemented by his extracting the essential 'Life' from books, or more specifically from the kind of simple human life he finds portrayed in the Scott novel. So too with Lily Briscoe, who finds inspiration for her picture in Mrs. Ramsay. Looking at her seated by the window with her son James, she ponders : 'Beneath the colour there was the shape', and she tries to penetrate to the 'shape', to the inner or essential Mrs. Ramsay, in order to paint it into her picture and so preserve it. But she reaches too to the reality of the Mr. & Mrs. Ramsay relationship which is what is implied by her 'colour burning on a framework of steel ; the light of a butterfly's wing upon the arches of a cathedral'.

Life is Valuable and Beautiful

The central vision of the first part of *To the Lighthouse*, therefore, is one of life's being essentially valuable and beautiful, something of its nature having an eternal quality which can endure and triumph over difficulties and hostile forces that at times can be destructive. This is, too, the vision of the book as a whole. It is what is restored or painfully striven for in the final section of the novel.

The Dark Side

In the central part of the novel it is the dark side of life, or life that is hostile and can crush the helpless individual, that is explored. Nancy, in the first part of the book, is searching her rocks and pools on the shore. Contact with the rock, sea water stirs her imagination, so that she sees Man's struggle against hostile reality in images and symbols of the sea :

> Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made minnows into sharks and whales and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and so brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures, and then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down.

Here, God is seen as the cause of the world's anguish and sorrow. Nancy's vision of that reality that can bring 'darkness and desolation' becomes actual as 'Time Passes'. The 'downpouring of

immense darkness' begins. Forces of nature seem to be acting as agents of Fate, and so efficiently so that nothing can survive the 'flood', the 'profusion of darkness'. The sense of darkness is intensified, and its duration in time extended. The violent and destructive nature of the darkness is supported by the violence and chaos in nature : Night continues 'full of wind and destruction ; the trees plunge and bend their leaves' and the sea 'tosses and breaks itself'. There are, however, faint glimmers of light to keep hope alive. But man, following that faint glimmer, questions nature only to find 'no gentle world of nature to reflect his soul'. The general emptiness and lack of response is brought down to the particular, as Mr. Ramsay stretching out his arms one dark morning finds them still empty, 'Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before.'

Not only does man's sense of kinship with nature seems to be broken—for there are no answers given as the visionary stirring of pool or looking at a stone asks : 'What am I ? What is this ?—but the nature of that relationship itself, which had always seemed strong and secure, is now questioned : 'Did Nature supplement what man advanced ? Did she complete what he began ?' It seems no longer possible because with equal complacence she saw his misery condoned his meanness, and acquiesced in his torture. It is, therefore, pointless to pace the beach seeking an answer because 'the mirror was broken'.

The harsh power that Mr. Ramsay considered his children ought to be toughened to endure, therefore, takes a hold, and the forebodings of relentlessness and cruelty in Mrs. Ramsay's reflections are fulfilled. This is conveyed, primarily, through the heightened poetic quality of the writing. The bare facts of the cruel circumstances affecting the Ramsays and their friends are either stated unobtrusively in a parenthesis or are indicated through Lily's recollections in the final section of the book. The all-embracing form and cause of the chaos is war, which is meaningless and destructive. Nature, on the other hand, is also relentless, for Mrs. Ramsay dies suddenly and Prue Ramsay dies of childbirth. Through these two major forces the harmony and serenity created by Mrs. Ramsay and which for her 'was enough' is shattered so that there is a return to separateness. Charles Tansley gets his fellowship but lectures to a half empty hall. Augustus Carmichael achieves fame as a poet, but loses interest in life when Andrew is killed. Lily's life seems empty without Mrs. Ramsay ; her eyes seek through the busy 'Tube' or crowded Piccadilly for the vision that had brought meaning into her life. William Bankes, too, down the avenues of Hampton Court, seems to see Mrs. Ramsay among the fountains, and turns away quickly. Mr. Ramsay stretches out his arms in the dark and finds no response.

Conclusion

It would seem, therefore, that Nancy has been right, in that human effort seems futile, the powers of the darkening hand being so

much stronger. Yet the return to the old house, saved from slipping into oblivion by the efforts of Mrs. M'cNab and Mrs. Bast, indicates, on the other hand, the power and the influence that one human being can have on others. It survives ten years of chaos. The 'eternal core' that Mrs. Ramsay had discovered within herself is still felt and sought after by those who had come under her spell. It lives on after her death. The faint glimmer does in fact win through the darkness. The struggle to follow it, or the return to the past by Mr. Ramsay, Lily and the children, which brings a restoration to peace and serenity would suggest that the final 'message' of the novel is one of belief in the values of life and human endeavour. The individual has the power to overcome and create something of meaning out of the chaos. An image of this belief is provided by the pattern of the waves with their alternating rise-and-fall rhythm, and the pattern of the Lighthouse beam, with its long steady stroke penetrating the darkness.

The last word of comment, or the final image, is provided by Lily as she completes her picture. Looking back on life, she forms out of those 'daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark' one of those 'globed compacted things over which thought lingers and love plays'. From Mrs. Ramsay she has learnt that life 'from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole life a wave'. This she paints into her picture until the shape emerges through the colour. The picture fixes the 'vision' with Mrs. Ramsay at its centre.

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Double Vision in To the Lighthouse Or Multiple Perspective in To the Lighthouse Or The Three Levels of the Theme

Variety of Meanings

To the Lighthouse is a very complex novel, and different critics have read different meanings into it. While there is a general agreement that *To the Lighthouse* centres on questions of order and chaos, male and female, permanence and change and inflection and intuition, the critics are far from unanimous in the actual tracing out of these themes and the analysis of the patterns of imagery evoking those themes. Thus, for example, it is clear that the simultaneous completion of Lily Briscoe's painting and arrival of Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam at the Lighthouse are somehow functioning together to finish the book, but no two commentators have agreed as to what the function means as an ending of what has gone before. One claims that Mr. Ramsay is undergoing a transition from his former intellectual personality to a newly discovered intuitive view, while another critic says that Lily is moving from a concern with form, that is art, to a concern with content, that is life. Another critic sees in the ending a shift from time to the timeless, while a fourth one sees here a shift from egoism to selflessness. Yet another critic thinks of this simultaneous convergence as a clumzy device which resolves nothing. These examples, could be multiplied, but the dominant tendency, it is clear, is to interpret the thematic conflict—whatever it may be—as an antithesis of two mutually exclusive terms, one of which must be rejected in favour of the other. The full significance of the trip to the lighthouse is not grasped. It is too often seen as a one way ride.

However, this either—or strategy will hardly prove adequate for dealing with the multiplicity of points of view through which each character is seen in the first section, the descending and the ascending movement of the second section and the shifting simultaneity of event which shape the third.

Subject and Object

In answer to a question about the content of his father's books, Andrew had said, "Subject and object and the nature of reality". And it is exactly this problem which works its way through the novel on three perceptible levels—human relations, metaphysics and aesthetics. The novel can be seen to have been built around the problem of how the knower looks at the known, how one person looks at another, how man looks at nature and how the artist looks at life. Further, the overall quality of this relationship may be subsumed under the headings of order, a triumph over life's meaningless flux and chaos, a giving way to its all but irresistible force, or a blank confrontation of its stark emptiness.

A dialectic or a well-reasoned-out order is achieved by those who try to understand the nature of reality simultaneously from two different stand points—subjective and objective through which one must pass in making the transition from one perspective to the other. From whatever view point we regard life (thesis) then, whether it be that of a detached philosopher ironically contemplating from a height, or that of the busy mother and the housewife frantically involved in the fever and fret of daily routine, one must give it up in favour of the other (antithesis), becoming immersed in the waters of transition and emerging with a double perspective (synthesis). In other words both, an involvement in life and a certain detachment from it, are necessary in order to understand it fully. Doing only one of the two would naturally give a partial view of life, which can be quite misleading. Hence the need for a double perspective. One has to strike a balance, to lose which is ultimately to give way to the chaos of a black and lonely darkness on the one side, and to the disorder of a terrifying and senseless force on the other.

An Example

Half way through the book occurs an interesting passage in which the theme of the double vision and its accompanying water imagery is found :

"Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down. And then, letting eyes slide imperceptibly above the pool and rest on that wavering line of sea and sky, she became with all that power sweeping savagely in and inevitably withdrawing, hypnotised, and the two senses of that vastness and this tininess (the pool had diminished again) flowering

within it made her feel that she was bound hand and foot and unable to move by the intensity of feelings which reduced her own body, her own life, and the lives of all the people in the world, for ever, to nothingness."

Relation of Self to Other

Section one of the novel deals with the relation of self to other. It soon becomes evident that no one single trait or characteristic of a person can be seized upon and cherished in order to know him or her. Mrs. Ramsay, for instance, is a charmingly warm and beautiful woman, yet annoyingly concerned with ordering the lives of others, as is clear from the resentment which many of her circle show against her mania for marriage. Although she is maternal, intuitive, involved in life's common cares and capable of an unreasoning fear when she allows herself to dwell upon the tragic fragility of human life, she nevertheless is capable also of a triumphantly mystical detachment wherein life's inscrutable mystery appears ordered and revealed and the significance of her portrayal, as it emerges from the attitudes of others towards her as well as from her own broodings, is that the truth about Mrs. Ramsay encompasses both these aspects of her personality. Man is a double being and as such, should be viewed comprehensively.

Or, take, for example, Mr. Ramsay. He is a self-dramatising domestic tyrant, yet he is also admirable as a lone watcher at the dark frontiers of human ignorance. A detached and lonely philosopher, he, nevertheless, craves the contact of his wife and children. He is grim, yet optimistic, austere, yet fearful for his reputation ; petty and selfish, and yet capable of losing himself completely in a novel by Scott ; aloof, yet he thrives on the simple company and the humble fare of fishermen.

Similarly Lily Briscoe is a complex figure, spinster, disinterested in ordinary sexual attachment ; she is nevertheless capable of a fierce outburst of love. She is an artist perpetually terrified by a blank canvas, but she is able to find a solution to the complex problem of art-life relationship. Mr. Bankes, to consider another, is an unselfish friend and a dedicated scientist, yet he is a self sufficient bachelor. He is, nevertheless, a lonely widower craving for the affection of children. Charles Tansley is an irritating and a self centered pedant, yet he is also a sympathetic human being, a complexity which Mrs. Ramsay sums up : "Yet he looked so desolate, yet she would feel relieved when he went, yet she would see that he was better treated tomorrow, yet he was admirable with her husband, yet his manners certainly wanted improving, yet she liked his laugh".

The climax of the first section occurs at the dinner, a brilliantly dramatic communion-meal where each ordinary ego, with its petty aggression and resentment is gradually blended with the others into a pattern of completion and harmony.

Multiple Perspective

Personality, then, can be known only in terms of a multiple perspective : "One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with". And section one provides just such a perspective. Including his or her interior monologue, each character is presented from at least two points of view. Mr. Ramsay is seen chiefly through the eyes of Mrs. Ramsay, young James, Lily and Mr. Bankes. Mrs. Ramsay is seen through the eyes of Lily, Tansley and Mr. Bankes, while Mr. Bankes is seen through the eyes of Lily,—and Lily herself, through those of Mrs. Ramsay. Tansley is seen through the eyes of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily. It is through this technique of alternation that each is rendered more or less in the round.

This is how the first level—the relation of self to other is dealt with in the first section of the novel.

The Relation of Man to Nature

Section two deals with the second level—the relation of man to nature. It does not, as has been frequently supposed, portray merely the ravages of time and tide affecting the family and their summer-home. In addition to the almost complete destruction of the house, we are also shown its equally dramatic renewal. And its focus is on the comic epic figure of Mrs. M'cNab, who lurches through the house wiping and dusting, breaking a long dirge of sorrow and trouble, yet who feels, "looking sideways in the glass, as if, after all she had her consolation, as if indeed there were twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope." It is she and her helpers who fetch up from oblivion all the Waverly novels, and who rescue the house from annihilation.

In this section, the fortunes of the family suffer some serious setbacks. Mrs. Ramsay dies, Andrew is killed in the war, and Prue dies of childbirth, yet, we are given to understand that Mr. Ramsay's work will endure, for the fate of his books was somehow tied up with the Waverly novels. Also, as the next section proceeds to demonstrate, the family continue to develop. The central section of *To the Lighthouse*, therefore, demonstrates not the victory of natural chaos over human order, but rather the reverse. The forces of destruction are defeated by man's power and will to live.

The Relation of Art to Life

The third level of the theme, the relation of art to life, is treated in the third section of *To the Lighthouse*, which continues in the knowledge of loss and the achievement of gain. The structure of this section is based upon the shuttling back and forth between Lily on the island and those in the boat watching the island who in turn get further away. This is accompanied by the corresponding movement of those in the boat getting closer to the lighthouse and

Lily getting closer to the solution of her aesthetic problem. And the determining factor in each case is love (the art of life), which might perhaps be defined as order or the achievement of form in human relations through the surrender of personality. Lily finishes her painting as she feels the upsurge of that sympathy for Mr. Ramsay which she had previously been stubbornly unable to give. James and Cam give up their long-standing antagonism towards their father. Mr. Ramsay himself, at the same time, attains a resolution of his own tensions and worries. The point is not that they have made a one dimensional transition from this to that attitude, but that, since each is aware simultaneously both of what is receding and what is approaching, each has received in his way a sense of double vision.

Double Vision Through Imagery

The presence of this double vision can be further demonstrated by taking a closer look at the imagery of the book, its figure of speech, its scene and its plot. The lighthouse itself as the most conspicuous image, to begin with, functions in two ways as something to be reached, and as a source of flashing light. That means that it has a symbolic role to play. As a source of light, it appears in two connections, first, as it impinges upon the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay in the first section after she had finished reading to James, and second, as it flashes upon the empty house in section two.

Mrs. Ramsay, the busy mother of eight children and a woman of grace, who delights in social intercourse and can visit the poor, often feels the need "To be silent, to be alone". In a mood of detachment, peace and rest, she muses upon the alternating flashes of light. This musing gives her a sense of victory over life, and she identifies herself with the third stroke—the long steady stroke—which becomes for her an image of purity and truth, of strength and courage, searching and beautiful. Her "self, having shed its attachments was free for the strongest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless... Losing personality one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir, and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this serenity, and pausing there she looked out to meet the stroke of the lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three which was her stroke."

This is the thesis of her emotional cycle, the antithesis is evoked as her mood soon changes into one of grim recognition of the inevitable facts of "suffering, death, the poor," and she gradually descends from her state of triumphant freedom from the fret, the hurry and the stir by seizing upon the light from a different perspective, "for when one woke at all one's relation changed." Looking now at the light, it is "the pitiless, the remorseless"

Only when these two moods become reconciled, will the cycle be complete. The second view seems "so much hers, yet so little

hers, and then her meditations are crowned in their third phase by "exquisite happiness, intense happiness", and she cries out, "It is enough'. It is enough". It appears that by seeing the long steady flash of light in two different aspects—as an image of expansion and release and, then, as an image of contraction and confinement. She has received the final intuition of the truth about the nature of reality. And this intuition is that one must be both subjectively involved, and objectively detached from life, and that true happiness rests neither in the one sphere nor in the other exclusively, but in achieving a harmonious balance, however fragile, between the two. Now she can rest contented, if only for a moment.

The middle section of the novel portrays the death and the rebirth of the deserted house. Here, the light makes its second appearance by gliding over the rooms "gently as if it laid its cares and lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again". That this is one side of the doubleness is clear from the sentence, which follows immediately : "But in the very lull of the loving cares as the long stroke leant upon the bed, the rock was rent asunder, another fold of the shawl loosened, there it hung and swayed". And a few pages on, just before the arrival of the forces of renewal in the house, in "that moment, that hesitation when dawn trembles and night pauses", the lighthouse beam as an image of expansion and release (life-love-hope) and contraction and confinement (death-destruction-terror) held in relation, entered the rooms for a moment, "sent its sudden store over bed and wall in the darkness of winter, looked with equanimity at the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw". Thus the three moods-loving care, tearing apart and equanimity are so well represented by the light. It is only by going through the opposing experience that one gets a comprehensive view of life.

In the third section, as Lily begins her painting a second time, her brush descends in stroke after stroke. "And so pausing and so flickering she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related." Thus, in echo of the lighthouse beam itself, her vision begins to emerge in stroke and pause in alternation, and "the truth, the reality, which suddenly laid hands upon her, emerged stark at the back of appearance and commanded her attention". In other words, as the light flickers, as it goes and comes back, Lily begins to see the course that her painting was to take. This flicker, which to an ordinary observer is an endless dull repetition, holds Lily's mind and enables her to discover the truth and reality that the appearance signifies to her. The stroke and pause of the lighthouse beam symbolise the problem of subject and object and the perception of nature of reality. It is a matter of opposites held in dialectic relation.

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Symbolism in To the Lighthouse

Symbolic Dimensions

There is a sense in which imagery permeates and symbolism pervades the whole of *To the Lighthouse*. The title *To the Lighthouse* is symbolic. Characters take on a symbolic dimension, but are not mere symbols. Setting is, or becomes, symbolic.

The 'action' of *To the Lighthouse* takes place on an island, so that the location is surrounded, and cut off, by the sea. Off the coast of the island is an even smaller 'island', the rock, on which the Lighthouse stands. The link between the two islands is, first of all the sea, and also in a different way, the light beam of the Lighthouse shining rhythmically through the darkness. A journey to the Lighthouse is what James passionately longs for at the beginning of the book. That journey takes place in Part III of *To the Lighthouse*. So it is at the literal, concrete level, that sea, light and the journey are bound up with each other. From the literal level these take on a symbolic dimension, so that symbolically they weave the texture of the whole, and again each is linked or interwoven with the other at that symbolic level.

The Sea

The sea permeates thoughts, reflections, imagery—not surprisingly, as the sea can be seen and heard all day long from the Ramsays' holiday home on the island. The sea colours conversations : Mrs. Ramsay speaks of waves mountains high, and 'sea-birds and butterflies' are among the objects the Ramsay children love to collect and talk about in their attic bedrooms in which sea-weed is pinned to the wall and towels are gritty with sand from the beach, so that physically it is somehow brought into the house.

A kind of background music to the life of the Ramsay family is provided by the 'monotonous fall of the waves'. Through Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts the sound of the sea with its changing rhythms takes on a symbolic dimension which suggests an aural parallel to the visual alternating light and dark of the Lighthouse beam flashes. It seems to Mrs. Ramsay that for the most part the waves are consoling

with a kind of cradle song provided by nature : 'I am guarding you —I am your support'. At other times, however, the music of the sea could be menacing : 'Like a ghostly roll of drums, remorselessly beat the measure of life'. The sea can also be destructive.

There is almost a sense of ritual in the way in which people in turn seem compelled to look out to sea, across the bay. The first view of the bay, however, is created more at the literal level. In Mrs. Ramsay's visit to the village accompanied by Charles Tansley, the two come out on to the quay which yields a magnificent view of the bay :

> the whole bay spread before them and Mrs. Ramsay could not help exclaiming, 'Oh, how beautiful. For the great plateful of blue water was before her ; the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst ; and on the right, as far as the eye could see, fading and falling, in soft low pleats, the greens and dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them, which always seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men.
>
> That was the view, she said, stopping, growing greyer-eyed, that her husband loved.

The scene is emotionally coloured, first of all by the personal response to beauty in Mrs. Ramsay's exclamation : 'Oh, how beautiful, and secondly in her feeling for her husband which is built into the scene and somehow reflected back in her eyes : 'That was the view, she said, stopping, growing greyer-eyed, that her husband loved,' Other details in the description work beyond this particular passage, and beyond the literal, to echo their significance throughout the rest of the book. The two most striking of these details are the Lighthouse with which Mrs. Ramsay associates herself, and the sand dunes, with which Mr. Ramsay finds a kinship. 'That was the country he liked best, over there ; those sandhills dwindling away into darkness.' The dark of human ignorance, or the dark uncharted land of the intellect, forms the main area of Mr. Ramsay's preoccupation. In contrast to this the main association of Mrs. Ramsay is with the light, and more specifically the light that reaches from the Lighthouse.

Watching the waves shedding on the beach, another detail is built into the scene, which will be glimpsed again later in the novel, but then it will have taken on a significance : A boat, 'which, having sliced a curve in the bay, stopped ; shivered ; let its sail drop down..." In Part II, 'Time Passes', the small boat floating peaceably in the bay is suddenly found to be a victim of fate. In Part III, the little boat in which Mr. Ramsay with Cam and James is sailing to the Lighthouse makes its way through calm waters, watched by Lily.

For Lily, looking on the present scene, there is a moment of acute awareness in which she has a glimpse of something eternal, nd also a sense of something partially completed. Full completion

comes at the end of the book, when all the significant details are tightly woven into her picture.

Here it is that William Bankes, in his own unexpressed thought explores the nature of his friendship with Mr. Ramsay, attempting at the same time to make some kind of assessment of both the man and his work. Just as Mr. Ramsay had associated himself with the sand dunes, so Mr. Bankes also in looking at them thinks of his friend : "Looking at the far sand hills, William Bankes thought of Ramsays". Mr. Bankes recalls from the past significant moments which he believes changed something in Mr. Ramsay, and which therefore influenced their friendship. After Mr. Ramsay's marriage, he realises, 'the pulp had gone out of their friendship.' The whole of Mr. Bankes' search for some understanding of his relationship is controlled by reference to the sand hills : "But in this dumb colloquy with the sand dunes he maintained that his affection for Ramsay had in no way diminished". The climax of the sand dunes reference in this particular glimpse of the bay is achieved in a strange kind of surrealistic personification and visual presentation of friendship.

Apart from this profound symbolic treatment of the sea, and the different ways in which, through contact with it, people have come to some kind of awareness, there is another form of supporting sea motif which knits yet more closely the artistic unity of the whole. A significant moment from Lily's past, and one on which she ponders, had taken place on the beach. There under Mrs. Ramsay's aegis, she enjoys the friendship of Charles Tansley. It is on the beach that Paul and Minta become engaged, and it is there that Nancy forges a symbol for her attempt to understand life :

> Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and so brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures, and then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down.

The story that Mrs. Ramsay reads to her son is 'The Fisherman and his Wife,' and Mr. Ramsay, reading 'The Antiquary', appreciates the strength and simplicity of the fisherman and his life. Conversation at the dinner party turns on the fishing industry, and, unexpectedly, it turns out that an uncle of Charles Tansley was a lighthouse keeper.

The waves are predominantly storm-tossed in Part II of *To the Lighthouse*, but there is a restoration of calm in Part III. In the final chapter of the book, Mr. Ramsay, actually on the sea, can comment philosophically : 'The depths of the sea...are only water after all'. That is one approach. Another is the more detached, equally philosophic :

> So much depends then, though Lily Briscoe, looking at the sea which had scarcely a stain on it...so much depends, she thought, upon distance.

And, with a touch of whimsy humour at the end of the novel, old Augustus Carmichael as a Neptune figure, 'shaggy, with weeds in his hair and a trident (it was only a French novel) in his hand,' benignly blesses the universe.

The Light

In the opening paragraphs of *To the Lighthouse* both an event and an emotion are associated with the light. The event is the sail to the Lighthouse that could take place 'after a night's darkness,' and the emotion is one of joy roused in James at the prospect of the sail. Mrs. Ramsay in attempting to preserve that joy, in holding open the possibility of the sail, is the person associated with the light. She continually struggles to keep the 'light burning, for she sees life primarily in terms of the light, but containing 'dark areas', whereas Mr. Ramsay, on the other hand, looks on life as being predominantly 'dark'. The end of life for him is, for example, where 'light' is extinguished or 'that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished,' and the journey to it is one of darkness and danger, one in which 'our frail barks founder in darkness.' Light and dark in the opening episode stand for the emotions of joy and sorrow, though these are suggested by the more suffused shades of 'gloom or radiance'. They represent the 'extremes of emotion' that Mr. Ramsay can excite in his children's breasts. A more subtle form of this light—dark polarity, symbolic of joy and sadness, is used later by Virginia Woolf to describe Mrs. Ramsay's sudden sense of anguish at the Swiss girl's sorrow : 'Bitter and black, half-way down, in the darkness, in the shaft which ran from the sunlight to the linking 'shaft' there is the suggestion that the dark and the light, of joy and sorrow, are one, or form two different areas of the whole spectrum of consciousness. The same idea had been more subtly and concretely presented in the beautiful emblem of the bird flying out of the sunlight :

> All had folded itself quietly about her, when the girl spoke, as after a flight through the sunshine the wings of a bird fold themselves quietly and the blue of its plumage changes from bright steel to soft purple.

The culmination of the 'Light' imagery of the book is, of course, in the symbol of the Lighthouse. Seeking within her own consciousness, having penetrated to her 'wedge-shaped core of darkness', Mrs. Ramsay gropes after the light, the light and warmth which she sheds out of that darkness. Looking outwards in that moment of intensity, she looked at the light 'that was so much her', the long steady beam of the Lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay herself describes different modes of her identification with the Lighthouse. There is, first of all, a process of identity, of 'sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at.' There is also the more detached comparison that Mrs. Ramsay draws between qualities in herself

and qualities of the Lighthouse : "she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light." The Lighthouse as an enduring object which sheds light is an appropriate symbol for Mrs. Ramsay.

The high point of *To the Lighthouse* is the dinner party. At that moment in the evening there is a sense of all-pervading light and warmth.

The lighting of the candles at the dinner party has a twofold effect. It causes the group of people gathered round the table to come closer together, and it seems, too, to cut off the small group from the darkness of the night.

At the dinner party, too, Mrs. Ramsay wears her 'golden haze'. Paul and Minta 'glow'. Laughter spreads 'like a fire leaping from tuft to tuft of furze.' And at the centre of the party the perception of Mrs. Ramsay searches and seeks.

At the end of the dinner party, or after that symbolic occasion has drawn to a close, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are alone together in the drawing-room. Their moment of intimacy is felt as she looks out of the window at the Lighthouse and allows him to watch her doing so.

The whole action of the book is pervaded by the guarding and haunting presence, of light as it is by the presence of Mrs. Ramsay. The journey (from the beginning of the book to its close) is the journey to the Lighthouse. The three phases of that journey, called respectively, 'The Window', 'Time Passes', and 'The Lighthouse', represent alternating periods of light and dark in the life of the Ramsay family. So it is that structurally, the pattern of the lighthouse beam with its rhythmic steady flashes of light through the darkness forms, too, a basic pattern of the novel itself.

The Journey

The theme of a journey controls the opening paragraphs of *To the Lighthouse*. At first there is the literal expedition to the Lighthouse that James, 'for years it seemed' had longed for and which now seems about to take place. The sense of determination and ability as the child neatly and competently cuts out his pictures makes his mother see him as a potential leader, as 'directing a stern and momentous enterprise...' Structurally, the entire presence of James in Part I of *To the Lighthouse* is bounded by reference to the journey to the Lighthouse. At the beginning it is joy at anticipation. Finally, taken off to bed by Mildred :

> he kept looking over his shoulder as Mildred carried him out, and she was certain that he was thinking, we are not going to the Lighthouse to-morrow ; and she thought, he will remember that all his life.

In Part III, James skilfully steers the boat to the rock, so that his 'journey' also bounds the novel as a whole. The repeated references to the weather and the direction of the wind, unsuitable for the journey, but with the faint hope from Mrs. Ramsay that conditions could improve, create the atmosphere of a journey about to be embarked on. There is a slight sense of urgency too as Mrs. Ramsay tries to finish her knitting so that she will have a pair of socks to give, at the end of the journey, to the lighthouse-keeper's son. They should be finished in case the journey could take place. Also, her imaginative and compassionate picture of life on the Lighthouse rock makes the eventual journey the more real and somehow realisable in the mind of the reader.

The attitude of the father to his children is conditioned by stern demands. In order to be equipped for a life that is difficult and demanding, his children must be brought up on discipline and principle. He sees life as a journey :

> the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness...one needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure.

In contrast to the serious-mindedness of Mr. Ramsay and his use of the 'Journey' symbol, Mrs Ramsay refers lightheartedly and humorously to Mrs. Ramsay's visit to the town as : 'making the great expedition.'

There are multiple 'Journeys' associated by Mr. Ramsay with his work. The journey from A to Z represents the furthest possible journey that the human intellect can accomplish. Mr. Ramsay struggles to reach 'R'. Pondering on that journey as he walks across the lawn, Mr. Ramsay looks up 'as one raises one's eyes from a page in an express train' to see his wife at the window. After this vivid humorous use of the journey image as an outer objective correlative for an inner journey, Mr. Ramsay's reflections turn on the kind of qualities of character required by his stern intellectual journey. Into his reflections is woven an authorial comment on his character. The whole is controlled by images from a stern and demanding physical journey. So, as he continues to think of his failure in not reaching 'R'. 'Qualities that would have saved a ship's company exposed on a broiling sea' come to his aid, or, again, 'Qualities that in a desolate expedition across the icy solitudes of the Polar region would have made him the leader, the guide, the counsellor...'. And the courage to persevere, even though he feels he will achieve nothing great, is figured as 'Feelings that would not have disgraced a leader'. Mr. Ramsay's intellectual reach is described as an equivalent concrete physical journey :

> Yet he would not die lying down ; he would find some crag of rock, and there, his eyes fixed on the storm, trying to the end to pierce the darkness, he would die standing.

Mr. Ramsay sees himself too as the soldier dying at his post, and also as the 'leader of the doomed expedition' having but simple human needs. He is the leader of the successful expedition to the Lighthouse in Part III.

The consciousness of Lily Briscoe is linked with that of Mrs. Ramsay in that Lily's study of her psychological journey is also revealed in the metaphor of a sea journey :

> Lily Briscoe watched her drifting into that strange no-man's land where to follow people is impossible and yet their going inflicts such a chill on those who watch them that they always try at least to follow them with their eyes as one follows a fading ship until the sails have sunk beneath the horizon.

Lily is aware that Mrs. Ramsay seems to be losing her firm grip, but then notices the point at which the grasp is again sure. In the figurative description of that turning point there is a working together of the sea-journey-light symbolism : "It was as if the ship had turned and the sun had struck its sails again".

In another moment of 'danger' in which Mrs. Ramsay tacitly appeals to Lily to be pleasant to Charles Tansley, the hazard of the not-yet-formed party takes the form of a danger to a ship on its journey :

> I am drowning, my dear, in seas of fire. Unless you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man there—life will run upon the rocks—indeed I hear the grating and growing at this minute...

At the end of the party it is as if with the journey safely complete the boat rides the waves with assurance.

So Mrs. Ramsay, going upstairs to the nursery and looking out of the window, associates herself with the 'superb upward rise...of the elm branches' like 'the beak of a ship up a wave'.

The climax and literal parallel to Mrs. Ramsay's figurative journey over the sea takes place when Mr. Ramsay sails to the Lighthouse.

27

Select Literary Criticism

(1)

Dinner Party in To the Lighthouse

It is always helpful, when reading her, to look out for the passages which describe eating. They are invariably good. They are a sharp reminder that here is a woman who is alert sensuously. She had an enlightened greediness which gentlemen themselves might envy, and which few masculine writers have expressed. There is a little too much lamp oil in George Meredith's wine, a little too much paper cracking on Charles Lamb's pork, and no savour whatever in any dish of Henry James', but when Virginia Woolf mentions nice things they get right into our mouths, so far as the edibility of print permits. We taste their deliciousness. And when they are not nice, we taste them equally, our mouths awry now with laughter. I will not torture this great university of Oxbridge by reminding it of the exquisite lunch which she ate in a don's room here in the year 1920; such memories are now too painful. Nor will I insult the noble College of women in this same university—Fernham is its name—by reminding it of the deplorable dinner which she ate that same evening in its Hall—a dinner so lowering that she had to go to a cupboard afterwards and drink something out of a bottle; such memories may still be all too true to fact. But I may without offence refer to the great dish of Boeff en Daube which forms the centre of the dinner of union in *To the Lighthouse*, the dinner round which all that sensation of the book coherces, the dinner which exhales affection and poetry and loveliness, so that all the characters see the best in one another at last and for a moment and one of them, Lily Briscoe, carries away a recollection of reality. Such a dinner cannot be built on a statement beneath a dish-cover which the novelist is too indifferent or incompetent to remove. Real food is necessary, and this, in fiction as in her home, she knew how to provide.

—*E. M. Forster*

(2)

The Myth and Reality about Virginia Woolf

When I was appointed to this lecturership the work of Virginia Woolf was much in my mind, and I asked to be allowed to speak on

it. To speak on it, rather than to sum it up. There are two obstacles to a summing up. The first is the work's richness and complexity. As soon as we dismiss the legend of the Invalid Lady of Bloomsbury, so guilelessly accepted by Arnold Bennet, we find ourselves in a bewildering world where there are few headlines. We think of *The Waves* and say "Yes—that is Virginia Woolf" ; then we think of *The Common Reader*, where she is different, of a *Room of One's Own* or of the preface to *Life As We Have Known It* : different again. She is like a plant which is supposed to grow in a well-prepared garden bed—the bed of esoteric literature—and then pushes up suckers all over the place, through the gravel of the front drive, and even through the flagstones of the kitchen yard. She was full of interests, and their number increased as she grew older ; she was curious about life, and she was tough, sensitive but tough. How can her achievement be summed up in an hour ? A headline sometimes serves a lecturer as a life-line on these occasions, and brings him safely into the haven where he would be. Shall I find one today ?

—E. M. Forster

(3)

Disappearance of Shared Background

As recently as the nineteenth century, and even at the beginning of the twentieth century, so much clearly formulable and recognized community of thought and feeling remained in those countries that a writer engaged in representing reality had reliable criteria at hand by which to organize it. At least, within the range of contemporary movements, he could discern certain specific trends ; he could delimit opposing attitudes and ways of life with a certain degree of clarity. To be sure, this had long since begun to grow increasingly difficult. Flaubert (to confine ourselves to realistic writers) already suffered from the lack of valid foundations for his work ; and the subsequent increasing predilection for ruthlessly subjectivistic perspectives is another symptom. At the time of the first World War and after—in a Europe unsure of itself, overflowing with unsettled ideologies and ways of life, and pregnant with disaster—certain writers distinguished by instinct and insight find a method which dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness. That this method should have been developed at this time is not hard to understand.

—Erich Auerbach

(4)

Significance of Minor Events

Let us begin with a tendency which is particularly striking in our text from Virginia Woolf. She holds to minor, unimpressive, random events : measuring the stocking, a fragment of a conversation with the maid, a telephone call. Great changes, exterior turning points, let alone catastrophes, do not occur : and though

elsewhere in *To the Lighthouse* such things are mentioned, it is hastily, without preparation or context, incidentally, and as it were only for the sake of information. The same tendency is to be observed in other and very different writers, such as Proust or Hamsun. In Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* we still have a novel structure consisting of the chronological sequence of important exterior events which affect the Buddenbrook family ; and if Flaubert—in many respects of precursor-lingers as a matter of principle over insignificant events and everyday circumstances which hardly advance the action, there is nevertheless to be sensed throughout *Madame Bovary* (though we may wonder how this would have worked out in Bouvard et Pecuchet) a constant slow-moving chronological approach first to partial crises and finally to the concluding catastrophe, and it is this approach which dominates the plan of the work as a whole. But a shift in emphasis followed ; and now many writers present minor happenings, which are insignificant as exterior factors in a persons' destiny, for their own sake or rather as points of departure for the development of motifs, for a penetration which opens up new perspectives into a milieu or a consciousness or the given historical setting. They have discarded presenting the story of their characters with any claim to exterior completeness, in chronological order, and with the emphasis on important exterior turning points of destiny. James Joyce's tremendous novel—an encyclopedic work, a mirror of Dublin, of Ireland, a mirror too of Europe and its millennia—has for its frame the externally insignificant course of a day in the lives of a school teacher and an advertising broker. It takes up less than twenty-four hours in their lives—just as *To the Lighthouse* describes portions of two days widely separated in time.

—*Erich Auerbach*

(5)

Virginia Woolf and Bergson

Mrs. Dalloway, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and *The Waves* have some or the other traits of the Bergsonian philosophy. *Mrs. Dalloway* depicts the real time, the psychological time, contrasted with the mechanical time. The chiming of Big Ben at intervals imposes a sort of design on the chaotic experiences of characters, and the flow of Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts. The main figures of the novel Mrs. Dalloway and her antithesis, Septimus Warren Smith, are engaged in introspective analysis of their mental phenomena. Mrs. Dalloway goes to buy flowers one fine morning and is led to remember the past. The past memories crowd in upon her mind, Septimus Warren also recalls his past experiences through the remembrance of his deceased friend Evans. We have a glimpse into Mrs. Dalloway's mental life and ceaseless flow of thoughts through her impressions. The inner durations or the psychological time, and the continuous change of personality in this novel are akin to Bergsonian views of time and personality.

Similarly *To the Lighthouse*, divided in three parts, 'The Window', 'Time Passes', and 'The Lighthouse', depicts the inner

duration. The clock time covered in 'The Window' is a few hours, but in this short time the most intensive experiences have been revealed. In the portion 'Time Passes' the events of ten years have been recorded in a traditional fashion. It is in the third part that the proposed visit to the lighthouse materialises. Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe are governed by the instincts and intuition. Mrs. Ramsay in a way is the antithesis of Mr. Ramsay, the great intellectual and the philosopher. The deintellectualised conceptions portrayed in the novel resemble Bergson's denunciation of intellect. Moreover, Lily Briscoe's mind runs backward and forward in time. She not only has the vision of Mrs. Ramsay who is powerful even after her death, but what is going to happen in future, also engrosses her mind. She sees Mrs. Ramsay in vision after the latter's death. The journey to the Lighthouse is completed and Lily's picture is also finished. The intuition, and the delineation of personality, a flux in this novel, are similar to Bergson's intuition and personality.

—*D. K. Lal*

(6)

Mr. Ramsay

To the Lighthouse is another artistic creation which blends the stream of consciousness technique with the traditional narration. The novel opens with a proposed visit to the lighthouse, by the members of Ramsay family. Afterwards certain changes take place in the family including Mrs. Ramsay's death, as reported in a conventional way in "Time Passes". After a lapse of ten years, Lily Briscoe sees the proposed visit materialising, and she finishes her painting. The family living in an island of Hebrides, suggests microcosm of universe. The flickering invisible lighthouse symbolizes truth.

Mr. Ramsay, the great metaphysician, intellectual and philosopher is the opposite of Mrs. Ramsay, his wife, a creature of instincts. Virginia Woolf mentions about Mr. Ramsay's traits in a traditional manner. His stream of thought which is more philosophical and intellectual, runs as below :

> He stood, stock-still by the urn, with the geranium flowing over it. How many men in a thousand million, he asked himself, reach after all. Surely the leader of a forlorn hope may ask himself that, and answer, without treachery to the expedition behind him "One perhaps," one in a generation. Is he to be blamed then if he is not that one ? Provided he has toiled honestly, given, to the best of his power, till he has no more left to give ? And his fame lasts how long ? It is permissible even for a dying hero to think before he dies how men will, speak of him hereafter. His fame perhaps lasts two thousand years. And

> what are two thousand years? (asked Mr. Ramsay ironically, staring at the hedge). What, indeed, if you look from a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages? The very stones kicked with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare. His own little light would shine, not very brightly for a year or two, and would then he be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still. (He looked into the darkness, into the intricacy of the twigs.)

Mr. Ramsay is absorbed in finding out the solution of the higher problems of life. He is a philosopher and thinker; he is speculative and meditative; but his stream of thought is not so difficult to follow as that of Stephen Dedalus in the Proteus episode of *Ulysses*. Mrs. Ramsay, his wife is surprised why he is not at all interested in witnessing their children play cricket. He simply looks, nods, approves, and goes on.

—D. K. Lal

(7)

Treatment of the Stream of Consciousness

Virginia Woolf has failed to give vent to the subtle, half-formed thought, the nebulous sensations, which sometimes baffle the artist's power of expression. She has not expressed the illogical and irrelevant thoughts of consciousness. The delineation of the stream of consciousness is a controlled affair.

Mrs. Ramsay's stream of thought has different traits. Her thoughts do not soar high, and do touch the serious problems of life sometimes. Mrs. Ramsay's continuous flow to thought centres round her children, family and domestic matters.

"......Dear, dear, Mrs. Ramsay said to herself, how did they produce this incongruous daughter? This tomboy Minta with a hole in her stocking? How did she exist in that portentous atmosphere where the maid was always removing in a dust-pan the sand that the parrot had scattered, and conversation was, almost entirely, reduced to the exploits—interesting perhaps, but limited afterall—of that bird?......However, Minta came...yes, she came, Mrs. Ramsay thought, suspecting some thorn in the tangle of this thought; and disengaging it, found it to be this; a woman had once accused her of 'robbing her of her daughter's affections'; something Mrs. Doyle had said made her remember that charge again. Wishing to dominate, wishing to interfere, making people do what she wished that was the charge against her, and she thought it must be unjust."

Mrs. Ramsay's stream of thought runs on a lower plane. Like all other women, her children, her shabbiness, gossip and rumours of other women are her concern. Only at times, the problems of suffering, death and poverty captivate her imagination. Her stream of thought bears the impress of her personality. Mrs. Ramsay thinks:

> ......Only she thought life—and a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes, fifty years. There it was before her-life. Life ; she thought but she did not finish her thought. She took a look at life for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children, nor with her husband. A sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her ; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone) : these were, she remembered, great reconciliation scenes ; but for the most part, oddly enough, she must admit that she felt this thing that she called, life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were the eternal problems, suffering, death, the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here. And yet she had said to all these children. 'You shall go through with it.'

Mrs. Ramsay's stream of thought showing her preoccupation with life and death, is not radically different from the previous one, in its choice of words and the sentence construction. It is an example of the indirect interior monologue.

—D. K. Lal

(8)

Lily Briscoe

Lily Briscoe, like Mrs. Ramsay tries to discover reality. She paints her picture which is completed when the journey *To the Lighthouse* comes off. She never has had the great revelations. Her stream of consciousness flows :

> Little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark ; here was one. This, that, the other ; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave ; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together ; Mrs. Ramsay saying 'Life stands still here' ; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)—this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape ; this external passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stands still here, Mrs. Ramsay said. 'Mrs. Ramsay : Mrs. Ramsay' ; she repeated. She owed this revelation to her.

Thus, Lily Briscoe too inspired by the vision of the deceased, Mrs. Ramsay, thinks of reality. Her stream of thought flowing in short and incomplete sentences reveals her temper and nature. The deceased Mrs. Ramsay controls and guides her thoughts. The

question of reality absorbs her mind and she has her own revelation. There is no fundamental difference between the traits of her stream of thought and those of Mrs. Ramsay.

Virginia Woolf had mostly adopted the indirect interior monologue in this symbolical novel to reveal thoughts of different characters. She allows characters to reflect, and at the same time, adds her own comments.

—D. K. Lal

(9)

The Significance of Reaching the Lighthouse

"The Lighthouse" includes both the narrative resolution and the completion of the novel as a poem. Ten years after the events of "The Window," Mr. Ramsay insists that the trip to the lighthouse be completed as a rite in memory of his dead wife. The reunion is made into a conventional narrative device : also present at the ritual are the surviving children, the now famous poet Mr. Carmichael, and the painter Lily Briscoe.

The conclusion is divided into three parts, two of which serve chiefly in a narrative function. The first of them is a prologue comprising Lily's awakening, her reflections, and her encounter with Mr. Ramsay, in which, by refusing to praise his boots, she eschews playing Mrs. Ramsay's role. Having ceased to create him in terms of any image, she has come to see him as separate and distinct. The second part is spliced in with the third. It describes in various monologues the change in the grown children's view of their father as their boat reaches the lighthouse. It shows how James hated his father, which had begun in 'The Window' at his mother's knee is exorcised at last. But the thread of the novel also reveals the essential nature of the lighthouse. James comes to recognise it as separate reality, imposed on the imaginative reality it had assumed in the window ten years ago. Mr. Ramsay fulfils its original meaning at least. He travels "out there." As the family reaches the lighthouse, the cycle is closed.

—Ralph Freedman

(10)

The Window versus the Lighthouse

As an image, the lighthouse serves several purposes. In the opening and concluding sections of the novel, it is an opposite of the window and suggests the male as opposed to the female principle. But this relationship is always complex. The two images are conceived in a dual function, constantly alternating with each other. The lighthouse is external to the window's internal vision, but the window is also the recipient of the beam from the lighthouse. Indeed, the lighthouse is shown as revealing, with its rhythmic

glare, the disintegration of the window's world. Both images, then, are seen sometimes as perceivers, sometimes as objects of perception. But the difference between them is manifest, and, so it seems, irreconcilable. The concept of the window as passive and sensuous apprehension involves qualities of the fecund and organic, the perceptual and subjective. As an object and an organ of awareness, it reflects the romantic reconciliation of opposites. But the lighthouse is actively engaged in time, movement, and change. It reveals the "moment" in its vivid interaction between consciousness and world.

—*Ralph Freedman*

(11)

The Narrative and the Satire

The narrative and the satire of manners are reminiscent of *Mrs. Dalloway*, but in *To the Lighthouse* they are presented with even greater formality. Most obvious is Virginia Woolf's handling of place, which has been moved closer to the formal unity and symbolic concreteness of a poem. The specific landmarks of Virginia Woolf's novels—the streets of London or the Cornish coast—have been replaced by an undefined island in the Hebrides, possibly the Isle of Skye. Anticipating in its symbolic sweep and majestic generality the formal interludes of *The Waves*, this attempt to transpose life to a more universal plane matches a more symbolic reflection of society and human relationships. The characters, though often depicted with sharp realism, are also types—male and female, child and middle-aged adult, scientist and artist—while many of their relationships are almost allegorical. We deal with a typical marriage, a typical friendship, a typical love affair, typical relations among children and between mother and son. Most pronounced is the conscious use of myth. The Ramsays' marriage is enlarged into the archetypal marriage of the sterile, intellectual male and the fecund, sense-ordered female. Mythical motifs, such as lighthouse, skull, or water, are precisely rendered.

—*Ralph Freedman*

(12)

Novel of Manners

To the Lighthouse—like most novels by Virginia Woolf—is also a novel of manners. Not only the Ramsay and their observer Lily Briscoe but also all of the other figures comprise a picture of middle-class academic society at the beginning of the Georgian era. Characters are treated with the sharp satire and the eye for incongruities within prescribed conventions which is the heritage of Jane Austen. As in its traditional prototypes, the novel is set in a rambling summer-house where society can be depicted at leisure with ample opportunity for personal interaction. Charles Tansley, the "atheist," blundering, aggressive, "writing his dissertation," is treated with pitiless satire at one moment and with warm insight at

another. The fastidious bachelor-scientist, William Bankes, is shown with his excellent manners and his limited sensibility. On the other hand, old Mr. Carmichael, the social blunderer, emerges as a successful lyrical poet who alone can communicate with Lily Briscoe. This group is carefully devised as a satiric portrait of the times, and of a particular way of life, but it also suggests a pattern of sensibilities illustrating the movement of the narrative. The dinner table, divided between husband and wife, acts as a magnetic field in which the members of his group are in continuous suspension, drawn hither and thither by either pole.

—*Ralph Freedman*

(13)

The Sea Symbol

Apart from this initial introduction to the significant scene that the bay and its surroundings provide, Lily Briscoe and William Bankes make their way together to the gap in the hedge that gives them access to it, so does Mr. Ramsay on his own, Mrs. Ramsay on her own from her drawing-room window looks out over the bay, and finally Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay walk together to look at the scene in the late evening after the young children have gone to bed. For each the scene affords a moment of awareness.

A sense of ritual is hinted at as Lily and William Bankes reach :

> the break in the thick hedge, guarded by red-hot pokers like brasiers of clear burning coal, between which the blue waters of the bay looked bluer than ever.

The image created out of the natural setting is one of worship with a suggestion of fire in the 'brasiers' of the red-hot pokers. The ritual implication is continued in the sense of the regularity of the visits : "They came there regularly every evening drawn by some need and also in the implication that the ritual can satisfy some need." The effect of the vision or insight provided by the sea is of a mystical or spiritual nature : "It was as if the water floated off and set sailing thoughts which had grown stagnant on dry land, and gave to their bodies even some sort of physical relief". The beholders or devotees are somehow re-created and restored.

—*The Arnold Series*

(14)

Mr. Ramsay and the Sea

Mr. Ramsay makes his solitary pilgrimage to the bay which sums up for him the 'dark of human ignorance' that he has the courage to face, and reveals to him 'we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on'. Mr. Ramsay's power of reaching to the essential, or the essence of things, is suggested here by his

outward appearance, in that he "shed all superfluities." The solitary nature of his intellectual probing is also indicated by a symbol suggested by his appearance : 'He looked barer and felt sparer' and stood 'like a desolate sea-bird, alone'.

Mrs. Ramsay, in her brief moments of solitude after James has been taken off to bed, looks from the drawing-room window across the bay, identifying herself with the light of the Lighthouse : 'she looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her, which had her at its beck and call.......' As her philosophic reflections develop, they reach a climax of emotional intensity as she realises and acknowledges the exquisite happiness she has known. In highly charged poetic language, sea imagery expresses the 'ecstasy' of her joy :

> (the steady light) silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curled and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, 'it is enough. It is enough'.

When Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay walk together to the gap in the hedge, she, surprisingly perhaps, turns her back on the bay. She regrets that her husband had seen her as she sat thinking ; her reflections and homage to the bay and the Lighthouse, had been made before she came out of the house. Mr. Ramsay, on the other hand, pondering on his favourite 'sandhills dwindling away into darkness' reveals through his pondering the significance the sand dunes hold for him. Away in their direction 'One could walk all day without meeting a soul'. In other words the sand dunes, with their barrenness and their dwindling away into darkness, offer a solitude and peace. This Mr. Ramsay associates with his youth in the days before he was married, when he could wander off on his own for a day's walk in the country. It is a region of freedom, unshackled by domesticity Before leaving the view of the bay, however, Mr. Ramsay acknowledges his love for his wife, and with it his gratitude for the domesticity she has created for and around him.

The climax and resolution of the sea symbolism is, of course, worked out in the final part of *To the Lighthouse*. There the actual sea and journey symbolism are working together.

—*The Arnold Series*

(15)

Light : Its Effect on Characters

Something of Mrs. Ramsay's glow or 'light' is communicated to William Bankes. Lily's comment on his rapture as it indicates, by the comparison she makes, that she too is aware of that 'light'. One could no more disturb Mr. Bankes' absorption, she suggests,

than break up the shaft of sunlight lying level across the floor. Her own response to Mrs. Ramsay's beauty, akin to William Bankes' response, is imaged by the author, too, as a related or reflected 'light' : 'Looking along his beam she added to it her different ray'.

The reality of Lily's vision, and of William Bankes' response to that reality as it is painted by Lily, shows a conscious attempt to capture and re-create an impression of Mrs. Ramsay's 'light', Lily :

> saw the colour burning on a framework of steel ; the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral.

> there is a sense, also, in which the balance of light and shade in the picture—'A light here required a shadow there'—is a kind of abstract of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and the dark-light symbolic presentation of their relationship.

—*The Arnold Series*

(16)

Light and Darkness Symbol

The 'light' for Mr. Ramsay, or in his consciousness, is primarily of the intellect. But even in that landscape of the mind the prevailing atmosphere is one of the 'dark'. There is the curious image of the inability of Mr. Ramsay's intellect to penetrate further.

Then the image of darkness is retained, but a sudden shift in significance is given to it : 'In that flash of darkness he heard people saying—he was a failure.' The normal image of a sudden realisation or revelation is the 'flash of light'. Here, however, the 'dark' of Mr. Ramsay's inability to see further (in the sense of his intellectual exploration) is fused with the 'dark' of his anguish at his sense of failure within that single phrase 'flash of darkness', which at the same time conveys a sense of sudden realisation.

For Mr. Ramsay, the 'dark' is an area in which truth must be, and is, affronted. So, standing on his favourite lonely promontory, for example looking out to sea, he is inwardly 'facing the dark of human ignorance'. Or, in another kind of way, looking into the darkness, into the intricacy of the twigs, he becomes aware of the truth or reality of his own life and achievement. But the possible success and achievement of that life in the wide perspective of time and accumulated human greatness, is symbolised by a light :

> His own little light would shine, not very brightly, for a year or two, and would then be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still.

In his sense of anguish, of, that is, the 'dark', Mr. Ramsay finds support in the 'light and warmth of his wife's sympathy. So

Mrs. Ramsay, animated and alive, fuses all her emotional energies into force, burning and illuminating', in order to satisfy his needs.

—*The Arnold Series*

(17)

An Emblem of Mrs. Ramsay's Compassion

An emblem of Mrs. Ramsay's compassion or power to heal, or as the author matter-of-factly calls it her 'competence', is the 'nurse carrying a light across a dark room' assuring a fractious child the 'light' here standing for what Mrs. Ramsay has it in her power to give to others. A similar kind of emblem is used by Mrs. Ramsay herself in her reflection on her own beauty and ability to succeed with people : 'She bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty'. The 'light' here is that quality to attract people which people respond to, and through which they find access to her compassion. And Charles Tansley's moment of rapture at Mrs. Ramsay's beauty, expressed in a conventional light image, 'with stars in her eyes', is at the same time an occasion on which he experiences her compassion.

The warmth and brightness of Mrs. Ramsay's 'light' creates the 'circle of life' into which she can take her husband and make him secure. It fills the house too as she 'created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow'. It is responsible too for the almost golden world of the Ramsay children, or of the childhood which she fosters and cherishes. It is primarily a sun-filled world, though it has its shadows. It is suggested by the 'fastnesses' of their attics into which the sun pours, lighting up their simple treasures : '(the sun) lit up bats, flannels, straw hats, inkpots, beetles......'

—*The Arnold Series*

(18)

The Journey Symbol

Less a symbol, but more a playful motif to give shape to the narrative, is another kind of journey that takes over when Mr. Ramsay after visiting his wife, resumes his walk in the garden. He searches in his thoughts, 'forging and picking', the substance of a lecture he is to give at Cardiff. The mental process is imaged as a ride on horseback :

> like a man who reaches from his horse to pick a bunch of roses, or stuffs his pockets with nuts as he ambles at his ease through the lanes of a country known to him from boyhood. It was all familiar. . . .Hours he would spend thus, with his pipe of an evening. . . .but at length the lane, the field, the common, the fruitful nut-tree and the flowering hedge led him on to that further turn of the road where he dismounted always, tied his horse to a tree, and proceeded on foot alone. He reached the edge of the lawn and looked out on the bay beneath.

The bay with its view out to sea is at the end of his journey. By a curious linguistic twist in the above passage, Virginia Woolf has fused into one four different and separate 'journeys'. There is, first of all, the literal stroll up and down the terrace and through the garden that Mr. Ramsay takes each evening, ending at the view which, Mrs. Ramsay has told us, he loves. There is the mental journey of moving from idea to idea already referred to. There is the recollection of country walks, vividly re-created in such details as nuts, roses, lanes with their turnings and stiles. The whole is fused into one through the almost unobtrusive continuo of the ride on horseback, metaphors of which, such as the 'foraging', 'like a man who reaches from his horse', ambling at ease, or dismounting and tying up his horse, mark stages in the process of his thinking.

With Mrs. Ramsay the journey symbol is very much bound up with the symbol of the sea to represent her struggle with life, and more specifically with her apparently waning power to create the 'flow' of her party. The first reference is more particularly to the sea as an element in and against which she is struggling.

—*The Arnold Series*

(19)

The Narrative Technique

A novelist such as Virginia Woolf, for instance, requires of her reader what a playwright requires of an actor : namely, to read the verbal symbols, the words and phrases themselves, appropriately so that their emotional suggestiveness and collaboration may be felt.

The problem of determining the various points of view was approached by watching carefully for specific indications of a shift from one angle of perspective to another. The explicit statement of a narrator was perhaps the simplest index of a shift ; it was also the tone of, or the feeling implicit in, the statement that identified a particular consciousness. It was necessary, therefore, to attend to such things as syntactical peculiarities : the introductory clause, the participial phrase, the mood and tense of the verb, the repetition of a particular word or phrase, the conditional sentences, and so on. All of these and other devices as well were found to be inconspicuous but important signals for directing the reader from one consciousness to another.

It is true that even an experienced critic may mistake a narrator or the tone of his utterances, because the author has made or has left the passage ambiguous. The confusion over Swift's position in relation to Gulliver's in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels* is an excellent example of an ambiguity of tone. The author, however, is the cause of error only some time.

—*Moris Peacock*

(20)

Novel with a Multiple-Point-of-View

It is true also that a reader need not go through all this detective work to get through the novel But if he learns some of the techniques for determining the narrator, the tone, the feeling, etc., his literary experience will be enlarged considerably ; and he will also be more sensitive to the subjective novel as well as to the subtleties of other kinds of imaginative literature.

The problem of studying a multiple-point-of-view novel is complicated by the fact that very often the narrators, through whose minds the fictional material is being filtered, have not established for us at the beginning of the work, but rather have given to us piecemeal, elusively ; so that even at the end, though we may see a narrator in his entirety, we do not necessarily see him conclusively : he remains the sum of our impressions, a fluid personality.

But since linguistic changes at times also indicate a shift in the focus of narration, the samples, for the stylistic analysis of each point-of-view, were taken from sections as early in the text as that narrator first appeared and provided material in which no (or as few as possible) interruptions were introduced by intervening narrators.

—Moris Peacock

(21)

Feeling versus Intellect in To the Lighthouse

The restless intellect has a way of 'peeling the flesh and blood off everything', and rending the thin veil of civilization. Devoid of human touch, like modern science and its discoveries, it becomes harmful and hurting, and shows 'astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings.' Both Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley are unmindful of the feelings of others. When Mrs. Ramsay said that going to the lighthouse depended on the weather being fine the next morning, James felt extraordinary happiness. But both Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley dashed his spirits by asserting that it would not be fine as the wind was due west. Mr. Ramsay, 'lean as a knofe, narrow as the blade of one' hurts his wife's feeling, too, by saying 'Damm You' to her because she 'flew in the face of facts' by doubting his opinion and saying that the wind often changed. Sir Leslie Stephen, according to Virginia Woolf, in order to express his anguish, if ever a visitor threatened to stay not merely for tea but also for dinner, used to 'burst out, half to himself, half to the powers above, but quite audibly'. Mr. Ramsay, like the over-sensitive and nervously irritable Sir Leslie Stephen, talks aloud unmindful of causing embarrassment to the family, and of hurting the feelings of the person present there. This trait of Mr. Ramsay's character is pointed out at two places in this novel. When poor old Augustus Carmichael asked for another plate of soup, Mr. Ramsay 'was screwing his face up, he was scowling

and frowning, and flushing with anger'. Mrs. Ramsay saw 'his anger fly like a pack of hounds into his eyes, his brow, and she knew that in a moment something violent would explode'. Again, while going to the lighthouse, when the sails flapped and the boat made no motion at all, James and Cam were afraid that Mr. Ramsay would lose patience in a moment.

—*N. C. Thakur*

(22)

Intuition

Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, on the other hand, symbolize the intuition—non-discursive immediate knowledge—that comes when one is completely forgetful of everything external as well as internal. Mrs. Ramsay :

> could be herself by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of—to think ; well not even to think. To be silent ; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated ; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedgeshaped core of darkness, something invisible to others......and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless....... There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, resting on a platform of stability.

All those who, sinking into themselves, have become free, can, like Mrs. Ramsay, know without seeing and comprehend without learning. Similarly Lily Briscoe, who, having a few moments of nakedness like an unborn soul, bereft of body, unconscious of outer things—her name, her personality and her appearance—can rise above herself, become capable of having visions, and of seeing in a flash.

—*N. C. Thakur*

(23)

Inadequacy of Human Relationships

Besides conveying her ideas about intellect and intuition, Virginia Woolf wants to suggest her idea of 'inadequacy of human relationships.' When Mrs. Ramsay became conscious of the fact that she had to hide many small things from her husband—that the mending of the green-house roof would cost fifty pounds, that his last book was not quite his best one—she felt a very disagreeable sensation. She became aware of the fact that her relationship with her husband could never give her the pure joy of two harmonious notes sounding together of being inextricably the same like waters poured into one Jar. Virginia Woolf emphasizes these feelings by making Mrs. Ramsay remember the odious treatment that Mrs. Carmichael had

meted out to her husband in turning him out of the house. Mrs. Carmichael was unable to understand her husband, the poet, who, to Lily, looked like 'an old pagan God, shaggy, with weeds in his hair, and the trident in his hand'. The Carmichaels and the fairy story of the Fisherman and his Wife, which Mrs. Ramsay read to James, become the symbols of the inadequacy of human relationships of which Mrs. Ramsay had been conscious. The inadequate relationship of the fisherman and his 'good Ilsabil', who disagrees with him, symbolizes the flatness and dissonance of human relationship.

—*N. C. Thakur*

(24)

Use of Allusions

Virginia Woolf also uses allusions from religion, and religious art, to evoke the reverence that the various characters in the novel feel. After having seen Mr. Ramsay sitting with James in the window with a rapture equivalent to the love of dozens young men, William Bankes saw Lily's painting and Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, and he thought of Raphael's Mother and Child—objects of universal veneration. This allusion, therefore, becomes a symbol of Mr. Bankes's veneration for Mrs. Ramsay. In the same way Mr. Ramsay's sharing bread and cheese with the old fisherman and his son becomes symbolic. It suggests Christ's breaking bread with the fisherman and evokes in us the respect that James and Cam felt for their father. Cam thought 'This is right, this is it', and she felt, as she did in the study when the old men were reading 'The Times', that 'he was most lovable, he was most wise, he was not vain or a tyrant'. Thus, because Mr. Ramsay's eating bread and cheese with the old fisherman, has a religious significance, it summons up Cam's old feelings of love and admiration for her father, and helps her to break away from the vowed pact she had made with her brother against him.

Trees and birds, too, like character and allusion, attain symbolic value in *To the Lighthouse*. William Bankes, unlike Mr. Ramsay, was not one of those men 'who do their best work before they are forty'. He was capable of his best even when he was old enough to be Lily's father. Lily Briscoe admired him, and, as they came to pause by the pear tree, said silently, 'I respect you......in every atom ; you are not vain ; you are entirely impersonal ; you are finer than Mr. Ramsay ; you are the finest human being that I know...praise would be an insult to you, generous, pure-hearted, heroic man'. The long-lived pear tree that is known to have borne fruit even though 300 years old becomes a symbol of the utility and vigour which Lily Briscoe associated with William Bankes. The same pear tree reminds Lily Briscoe of Mr. Ramsay's splendid mind. Lodged in the fork of the pear tree she sees 'a phantom kitchen table, one of those scrubbed board tables, grained and knotted, whose virtue seems to have been

laid bare by years of muscular integrity'. The kitchen table, reminding one of Sir Leslie Stephen's 'This is a table', becomes a symbol, as Andrew had pointed out to Lily, of Mr. Ramsay's intellection.

—*N. C. Thakur*

(25)

Lack of Negative Capability

Mr. Ramsay lacking "the power of being in uncertainties without irritably seeking after the fact", denies a truth because two facts—or perhaps only two meanings of a word—seem to conflict. But Mrs. Ramsay will not lie to herself. Sitting looking at the light flashing from the lighthouse, she reflects :

> Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at—that light for example. And it would lift up on it some little phrase or other which had been lying in her mind like that—'children don't forget, children don't forget'—which she would repeat and begin adding to it. 'It will end. It will end', she said. It will come, it will come when suddenly she added. We are in the hands of the Lord.
>
> But instantly she was annoyed with herself for saying that. Who had said it ? not she ; she had been trapped into saying something she did not mean. She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie. She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light...
>
> What brought her to say that : 'We are in the hands of the Lord ?' she wondered. The insincerity slipping in among the truths roused her, annoyed her. She returned to her knitting again. How could any Lord have made this world she asked. With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice : but suffering, death, the poor.

—*Joan Bennett*

(26)

Responsiveness to Injustice

Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay are alike distressed by the injustice they discern in the world, but he, because it is unjust that the high achievement of the mind should flower out of a society that is based on servitude, denies the value of that achievement. He lies to himself about it. It is she who insists upon facing the

truth. For Lucy Swithin (in *Between the Acts*) the truth includes a God and for all her brother's mockery she speaks as she feels :

> 'It's very unsettled. It'll rain, I'm afraid. We can only pray', she added, and fingered her crucifix.
>
> 'And provide umbrellas', said her brother.
>
> Lucy flushed. He had struck at her faith. When she said 'pray', he added 'umbrellas'. She half covered the cross with her fingers. She shrank ; she cowered ; but next moment she exclaimed.
>
> 'Oh there they are—the darlings'.
>
> The perambulator was passing across the lawn.
>
> Isa looked too. What an angel she was—the old woman'. Thus to salute the children ; to beat up against those immensities and the old man's irreverencies her skinny hands, her laughing eyes. How courageous to defy Bart and the weather.
>
> (*Between the Acts*)

Integrity and courage are among the gifts with which Virginia Woolf endows her women, for Lucy Swithin is another of those who are peculiarly feminine. Bart her brother thinks about her :

> She would have been, he thought, a very clever woman, had she fixed her gaze. But this led to that ; that to the other. What went in at this ear, went out at that.
>
> (*Between the Acts*)

And he loves her, but laughs at her :

> 'Superstition', he said.
>
> She flushed, and the little breath too was audible that she drew in as once more he struck a blow at her faith. But, brother and sister, flesh and blood was not a barrier but a mist. Nothing changed their affection ; no argument ; no fact ; no truth. What she saw he didn't—and so on, an infinitum.
>
> (*Between the Acts*)

When there is love between a man and a woman—and no novelist has understood this condition of things more fully than Virginia Woolf—the differences between them become contributory to a whole, as though together they made up a human being more complete than either. So it is with Lucy and her brother, with Clarissa and Richard Dalloway, with Mr. and Mrs. Hilbery, with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.

—*Joan Bennett*

(27)

The First Movement in To the Lighthouse

Throughout the day that occupies the first movement of *To the Lighthouse* the reader gradually discovers the relation between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. We see them together and apart, reflected in other minds and reflected in each other's. Mrs. Ramsay soothes his wounded vanity, fosters his faith in himself. Mr. Ramsay gives her a sense of security, of stability and of confidence in life. In the evening we see them alone together. She reflects about his vanity, his concern for his own fame, and it distresses her lest any one else should notice this flaw in him :

> It didn't matter, any of it, she thought. A great man, a great book, fame—who could tell ? She knew nothing about it. But it was his way with him, his truthfulness—for instance at dinner she had been thinking quite instinctively. If only he would speak. She had complete trust in him.

—*Joan Bennett*

(28)

Developing Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay Relationship

Mrs. Ramsay looks up from her book ; she can feel that now he wants to talk with her, she thinks of the day and all that has passed and she speaks of the engagement of Paul and Minta :

> 'They're engaged', she said, beginning to knit, 'Paul and Minta.'
>
> 'So I guessed', he said.

(*To the Lighthouse*)

And for a while they sit silent, each still half absorbed in what they have been reading :

> Then she became aware that she wanted him to say something...Slowly it came into her head, why is it then that one wants people to marry ? What was the value, the meaning of things ? (Every word they said now would be true.) Do say something she thought, wishing only to hear his voice. For the shadow, the thing folding them in was beginning, she felt, to close round her again. Say anything, she begged ; looking at him, as if for help.
>
> He was silent, swinging the compass on his watch chain to and fro, and thinking of Scott's novels and Balzac's novels. But through the crepuscular walls of their intimacy, for they were drawing together, involuntarily,

> coming side by side, quite close, she could feel his mind like a raised hand shadowing her mind; and he was beginning now that her thoughts took a turn he disliked—towards this 'pessimism' as he called it—to fidget, though he said nothing, raising his hand to his forehead, twisting a lock of hair, letting it fall again.
>
> 'You won't finish that stocking to-night', he said, pointing to her stocking. That was what she wanted—the asperity in his voice reproving her. If he says it's wrong to be pessimistic probably it is wrong, she thought: the marriage will turn out all right.

—*Joan Bennett*

(29)

Virginia Woolf's Departure

When Virginia Woolf discovered that life, as she saw it, and therefore her subject as a novelist, was "what the mind receives on an ordinary day", two courses were open to her. That she must reject the current form as represented in the works of Arnold Bennet or of Galsworthy was clear. But should she content herself with recording impressions as they flow in upon the mind or should she invite her "secondary imagination" to "recreate" by eliciting an order from those impressions? There were two principal reasons, I believe, why she chose the latter course. In the first place her genius was not autobiographical, she was not preponderantly interested in herself, so that she could not be satisfied with recording only the direct impressions made upon her own mind. This is implied in some of the things she says about the early work of James Joyce, in the essay already referred to:

> Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall. Let us trace the pattern, however, disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. Any one who has read *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or, what promises to be a far more interesting work, *Ulysses*, now appearing in the Little Review, will have hazarded some theory of this nature as to Mr. Joyce's intention.

—*Joan Bennett*

(30)

Virginia Woolf's Comprehensive Approach

From the conviction here expressed about the incompleteness of our knowledge of one another; and from the certainty here

communicated that our fellow-beings do nevertheless arouse in us profound and valued feelings, springs Virginia Woolf's individual art of creating human beings. The method is cumulative, and it is therefore impossible to isolate from her books a portrait which epitomizes a particular character, either by means of description or dramatization. Nevertheless, it seems to me false to suggest, as Mr. Forster does, that the beings she creates are less memorable than the persons in other great works of fiction. Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Dalloway, Eleanor Pargiter, each of the main personalities in *Between the Acts*, and many others from her books, inhabit the mind of the reader and enlarge the capacity for imaginative sympathy. It is sympathy rather than judgment that she invokes, her personages are apprehended rather than comprehended. Increasingly the writer eliminates herself from her books, the illusion of the all-seeing eye is replaced by the illusion that we are seeing by glimpses, with our own imperfect vision. Far more, however, is set before our eyes in the books than in normal experience. Not only are we given the impression made upon other minds, but also the impressions received and formulated by the diverse persons whose lives are interwoven for us and from the pattern of the book.

—***Joan Bennett***

(31)

Virginia Woolf's Endeavour to Understand

"When philosophy is not consumed in a novel, when we can underline this phrase with a pencil, and cut out that exhortation with pair of scissors and paste the whole into a system, it is safe to say that there is something wrong with the philosophy or with the novel or with both."

(*The Common Reader : Second Series*)

> So writes Virginia Woolf, upon the novels of George Meredith. In her own novels the "philosophy" is "consumed" to an exceptional degree. There are two obvious reasons why it must be so. First, because her whole endeavour is towards understanding rather than judgment, and it is from the judgments, pronounced or implied by authors, that we usually extract their own views upon ethical or philosophical questions ; and secondly because, in accordance with her own artistic purposes, she disappears from her books with growing completeness. We attend to the thought and the speech of her persons, but never to her own. Yet this clearly does not mean that her novels are empty of moral and metaphysical ideas.

It is not then for moral precepts not for a system of metaphysics that her reader will look—if he does so, he will look in vein. But no one can write about human beings without revealing their own sense of values. Much can be discovered from Virginia Woolf's

novels about the way she saw things ; about what things seemed to her important ; about what she valued and what she disliked. One notices that certain themes recur and must therefore have held an important place in her thoughts, and her handling of those themes reveals certain predilections and sometimes a peculiar conflict or tension of the mind, as of one poised between two opposed beliefs. Such a tension exists, for instance, in her feeling about life itself. Over and over again the people she creates experience the sense that life is chaotic, fragmentary, disillusioning. And as often they experience the intense joy of living. This tension in her feeling about life is already apparent in *The Voyage Out.* The novel moves between the poles of life and death, Rachel questions and seeks for life's meaning, for an order and beauty in life comparable to what she finds in music. When she plays the listeners sit.

—*Joan Bennett*

(32)

Virginia Woolf's Use of Symbols

To suggest her inscapes and to evoke her instresses, therefore, Virginia Woolf, like James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Andre Gide, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka and William Faulkner, makes an abundant use of symbols. Unlike Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, whom she calls 'materialists', Virginia Woolf is not interested in describing a very solid and substantial 'Mrs. Brown' with the brooch and gloves that she wore and the place and society she belonged to, but desires to convey what Mrs. Brown is : a symbol of 'the spirit we live by, life itself'. That Virginia Woolf was preoccupied with what life and reality is evident from the testimony of her friends, from her own remarks that she has recorded in her diary, and from the thoughts and utterances of most of her characters who ask questions about life and its meaning. Rachel in *The Voyage Out* questions, 'And life, what was that ?' Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* tries to find out 'What did it mean to her, this thing called life ? Similarly Bernard and Louis in *The Waves*, in order to understand life and personality, question, 'What am I ?' and 'Who are you ?' William Bankes in *To the Lighthouse* questions 'Is life this ?' and Eleanor in *The Years* thinks 'there must be another life'. Some of the utterances of these characters reproduce the exact phrases used by Virginia Woolf in her diary. "More and more do I repeat', she records in her diary, 'my own version of Montaigne—"It's life that matters."

—*N. C. Thakur*

(33)

Virginia Woolf's Characters

Virginia Woolf's characters, like their author, have their visions and dreams. Rachel and Hewet in *The Voyage Out*, Ralph, Katharine, and Marry in *Night and Day*, Lily in *To the Lighthouse*,

and Peggy and Sara in *The Years*, are some of the characters who under stresses of acute agony and emotional agitation have visions, and try to suggest them through symbols. For instance, when Ralph has to suggest a 'confused and emotional moment' of life, he resorts to drawing a symbolical central blot surrounded by a circumference of smudges.

Another, and perhaps the most important, reason why Virginia Woolf made a frequent use of symbols is the fact that she was constantly subjected to illnesses, acute influenza, and violent headaches. Long drawn-out illnesses, like highly emotional stresses, have a great sensitizing effect on the mind. They often make people clairvoyant. It was in illnesses, which she felt were partly mystical, that she saw her books in their ideal state. Explaining this in her diary, she says :

> Once or twice I have felt that odd whirr of wings in the head, which comes when I am ill so often—last year for example at this time I lay in bed constructing A Room of One's Own...If I could stay in bed another fortnight. . .I believe I should see the whole of The Waves.

—*N. C. Thakur*

(34)

The Greatest Artistic Achievement

To the Lighthouse is Virginia Woolf's greatest artistic success because in it she had so struck the balance which the "stream of consciousness" method had before seemed to lack, that she was able quite naturally to pursue her personal speculations through the medium of a set of characters and a situation which seemed fully real to the common reader. The book was reprinted in Dent's Everyman Library, which is not exactly a storehouse of the exotic in literature. It had proved that the stream of consciousness method, though it might be "queer," was not so very, very queer after all.

It is tempting to wonder what would have happened if Virginia Woolf had ceased her experimenting at that point. Would she have gone on to write a dozen, perhaps half a dozen, novels on the same general lines as *To the Lighthouse* ; most of them, of course, not so good, one or two of them perhaps even better ? Is it here that we have lurking one or two of the great novels that were never written ? Can we imagine a literary competition in which competitors would be invited to write a successor for *To the Lighthouse*, as they have been asked to complete Edwin Drood, or in music to finish the Unfinished Symphony ? What sort of book would the successor be ? It is not altogether a profitless speculation, for as I have said, *To the Lighthouse* might inspire a dozen works. Yet profitless perhaps, after all, for in its author's mind it inspired none. It was said with truth that "she is a tireless experimenter," and the operative word is "tireless." She gave four more works of fiction to

the world, *Orlando* in 1928, *The Waves* in 1931, *The Years* in 1937, and *Between the Acts*, which was published posthumously in 1941. Yet apart from *Orlando*, which is great book but not a great novel,—hardly indeed a novel at all,—none of these can be said to follow by the logic of artistic development the lines laid down in the work of her "middle" period, from *Jacob's Room* to *To the Lighthouse.* Moreover, though they can be called the novels of her "last" period, this is mere biographical convenience ; for as works of art (as distinct from statements of a point of view about life) they contain no common element ; whereas in her "middle" period the reader can watch three definite stages of an artistic progress in a particular direction, the adaptation of the "stream of consciousness" technique to the point where it did exactly what she wanted it to do. It was surely a strange perversity of genius which diverted that progress into the separate and unconnected byways of the "last" period. It is of course inexcusable presumption on the part of the critic, of literature as of warfare, to dictate from his arm-chair the best strategy of approach for those who have to bear the brunt of battle, face the perils and bring off the spoils. But the present writer cannot help saying that for the sake of another *To the Lighthouse*, or another *Mrs. Dalloway*, or even another *Jacob's Room*, he would gladly have done without every word of *The Waves*, *The Years* and *Between the Acts*, much as they contain which is of the highest interest and the highest beauty. Not *Orlando*, however, for *Orlando* stands alone, fantastic and recalcitrant tailpiece to the progress which began with *Jacob's Room.*

—*R. L. Chambers*

(35)

Virginia Woolf's Limitations

Not knowing those below the "middle" class, then, how can she do anything but patronise them, or use them as ministrants to the cocoon-wrapped offspring of her little mental hive—aged nurses, for instance, who verve in later years to pin up bodices for the guests at their grown-up charges parties ? This is snobbery, but it is not the secret of her limitation. Jane Austen, too, was limited to her class, yet she seemed to carry her humanity to wider fields. Perhaps it is because she was mannered in a mannered age ; or perhaps she cannot surprise us as Virginia Woolf surprises us by casting a sudden flood of baleful light,, the light of pure hatred, upon a specimen of the "lower orders". In *Mrs. Dalloway* Doris Kilman, with her zeal for conversion and her green mackintosh coat, is truly hateful and truly imagined, so that we know her and ourselves hate her too, and so find ourselves in the drawing-room and have become one of "us". Or else this odd, elusive, shy, middle-class lady has slipped out at least on to the landing, and for a few moments shut the door.

—*R. L. Chambers*

(36)

On Virginia Woolf's Literary Technique

If it be true that Virginia Woolf was concerned in the first

place to display life as an aspect and function of the mind (taking mind to include the emotional and spiritual, the irrational as well as the rational elements in the human personality), and in the second place to destroy—or to transcend, which for her purpose is the same thing—the dividing line, the horizon of vision, experience and understanding which separates one human personality from all others, then it will be interesting to see what literary technique she evolved for the fulfilment of her purpose. Conversely a study of her prose, the way in which she used words, ought to illuminate and clarify our conception of her purpose. For hers is a very peculiar, a very individual style ; and while it is true generally that any "significant" writer will evolve an individual style adapted to throw light through his own angle of vision, it is not often that we find a writer taking such a large step as that which divides the style of *Jacob's Room* from the style of any English novel that had preceded it. To take such step is to pass from one world into another.

—*R. L. Chambers*

(37)

Superiority of To the Lighthouse

As the reader finds *To the Lighthouse* easier to read perhaps, at any rate more natural, than *Mrs. Dalloway*, so the writer is more natural, more at her ease. She finds it unnecessary, for example, to make use of the technical devices which she had employed to make the transition from scene to scene in the earlier book : and this is a gain, for though the tricks were used there with astonishing skill, the joints fitted so cunningly that scarcely a crack was visible, yet it would surely have been impossible to construct other books by the same technical formula. *Mrs. Dalloway* remains a book that no novelist could possibly imitate without disaster ; *To the Lighthouse* might inspire a dozen works, of which none need be the loser in originality for their derivation. It appears to move on "normal" constructional lines from scene to scene, though it is to be remembered that the "stream of consciousness" is still the method employed, so that the change of scene is more a change of aspect, a move from the consciousness of one character to the consciousness of another. Nevertheless the movement is easy and natural, because in the closely knit, homogeneous world which the reader is asked to contemplate, there is felt to be no need of artificial bridges to carry him from point to point in space, time or consciousness. A small feature of the book will perhaps illustrate its difference from *Mrs. Dalloway* in this respect. The latter is printed from beginning to end as one piece without parts or chapters or numerical section-headings or any mark of transition beyond an occasional blank space of two lines or so in the text ; and this is right, for such typographical interruptions would have interfered with the internal unity of the whole. *To the Lighthouse*, on the other hand, marks its change of scene by a numerical heading : the convention is accepted because it is necessary, and because it does not interfere to any important extent with the flow of

the "stream of consciousness." The number of possible changes of scene is in any case so small that after each conventional shift the reader knows at once where he is.

—*R. L. Chambers*

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Virginia Woolf's Poetic Prose

In fact it seems to be true that there are some ages when most creative writers find it easier to give their interpretation of the contemporary truth in prose than in poetry. Fourth-century Greece was an age of prose. Eighteenth-century England was an age of prose, present-day England is an age of prose. Virginia Woolf chose prose for her medium of expression, but her prose is a poetic prose. What I have tried to suggest is that it is bad criticism and untrue to say, as I have heard it said, either that "she is really writing poetry," or that she ought to have been. Mr R. W. Moore says in his excellent analysis, "The question immediately arises whether there can be said to be any definite boundary between the realms of poetry and prose. The answer must be that there is not. But at least we can postulate two extreme poles as it were in the scale of literary composition, Poetry and Prose, and between these two there may be said to be a tract in which on the one side there is the poetry that approximates to prose and on the other side the prose that approximates to poetry." This prose that approximates to poetry is not a spurious or hybrid form, but a genuine and legitimate medium of expression in its own right. Virginia Woolf is in a great tradition, which includes the names of Plato and John Donne and Sir Thomas Browne and the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible. Furthermore it is a fact that by writing a poetic prose, by borrowing from the technique of poetry while retaining the essential prose rhythms, all these writers exercised a true artistic insight into the possibilities and limitations of their medium. They realised the enormous advantage that was to be had for their purpose in shunning as far as possible that extreme pole of prose. Virginia Woolf realised this better than anyone else who was writing prose in her time.

—*R. L. Chambers*

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The Contemporary Scene of Social Life in London

Mrs. Dalloway, the best known of Mrs. Woolf's novels, is yet seldom mentioned as their favourite by her admirers, who prefer *To the Lighthouse* or *The Waves* or even *Between the Acts*. It has been widely translated—into French, Danish, Dutch, German, Finnish, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. One interesting thing about it is amusingly pointed out by the bald title of German translation......Mrs. Dalloway. Ladies of fifty, and respectable at that time, are not usually cast as heroines. But

Clarissa's husband still loves her, her old lover Peter Walsh, returning after years of service in India, feels a renewal of excitement when he meets her, and Clarissa herself is still excited about living. This Frau of fifty belongs to the government class and is socially acceptable in the higher circles ; she is well known for her successful parties in her modest house in Westminster ; her husband is active in "government ; " their only child, a daughter, is just ready to be introduced into society ; she is giving a party the very night of the story at which the Prime Minister is to be present, and she is occupied during the June day with preparations abroad and at home a rejected lover comes unexpectedly to call upon her, and the party brings together several other friends from her younger days ; and the party comes off successfully. What could be very exciting about that ? Though World War I has been over for several years, the London social system still holds together, with clear class distinctions, and the weather is June and nice for walking. Nearly everybody walks, mostly through the West End of London—Clarissa, Richard, Peter Walsh, Elizabeth Dalloway, Septimus Smith, the shellshocked soldier, and his little Italian wife, Rezia. The ground covered includes the green park, Regent's Park, Russel Square, the Strand, Piccadilly, Bond Street, Whitehall—a very delightful tour. These seemingly unimportant happenings stir memories, associations, reflections, and feelings in the minds of the different characters, so that the inner and the outer aspects of experience are interwoven. Peter, for instance, walking to Bloomsbury for dinner at his hotel, hears the bell of the ambulance that has picked Septimus up, and reflects upon the triumphs of civilization and the communal spirit of London ; and he recalls exploring London with Clarissa from the top of a bus, and the talks they had had about those "unseen parts of us" that might survive ; and then he thinks of other meetings with Clarissa in the old days, brief and interrupted, but now, in memory and in absence, blossoming out with understanding, "after year of lying lost."

—Dorothy Brewster

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All Novels Deal With Character

I believe that all novels...deal with character, and that it is to express character not to preach doctrines, sing song or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic, and alive, has been evolved. To express character, I have said ; but you will at once reflect that the very widest interpretation can be put upon those words—besides age and country there is the writer's temperament to be considered. You see one thing in character, and I another. You say it means this, and I that. And when it comes to writing, each makes a further selection on principles of his own.

—Virginia Woolf

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The Influences on Virginia Woolf

With the influence of the Russian novel in general and of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Dostoevsky in particular, we enter another sphere. As with French painting, we are here faced not with theories and systems but with works of art. And we know for a certainty that she was not content merely to talk about them and hear them talked about. In 1912, on her honeymoon, she read *Crime and Punishment.* The same year, at Twickenham, she read *War and Peace*, between 1921 and 1923 she was collaborating with Koteliansky on translations of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. "The novels of Dostoevsky are whirlpools, gyrating sandstorms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul." These sentences from "The Russian Point of View", even allowing for the exaggeration inherent in their context, tell us clearly enough what the experience of the Russian novel had been for Virginia Woolf. When in 1940 she re-read Goldnweiser's *Conversations* with Tolstoy, her impressions, as noted in her *Diary*, have the same quality, the same intensity : "Always the same reality—like touching an exposed electric wire. Even so imperfectly conveyed—his rugged short cut mind—to me the most, not sympathetic, but inspiring rousing : genius in the raw. Thus more disturbing, more "shocking", more of a thunderclap, even on art, even on literature, than any other writer. I remember that was my feeling about *War and Peace*, read in bed at Twickenham." This revelation is described again in *Modern Fiction*, with more sobriety but also with more precision : Russian writers bring the sense of inconclusiveness, of the flux of life, of the anguished uncertainty of questions left unanswered. On the whole Helen Muchnic gives a fairly just idea of the relation between the popularity of Russian novels and the doctrines then in favour : "They formed the background for all those intellectual ventures—the philosophy of Bergson, the critical doctrine of A. France, the dramas of Maeterlinck, the painting of the Impressionists and Expressionists—which proclaimed the right of the individual to respect his own intuitive beliefs as possessing general interest, and suggested the importance of that which lay beyond the grasp of scientific observations." Without a shadow of doubt, it is from this psychological treasurehouse of the Russian novel that Virginia Woolf drew her inspiration rather than from the parallel systems to which it corresponds.

—*Jean Guiguet*

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Virginia Woolf's Readings

Although we have only fragmentary and intermittent information about the books read by our author, there is no doubt that she remained in constant contact with the literary production of

her time. To limit her library to that suggested by the collected essays, even supplemented by the two hundred articles still scattered throughout various periodicals would be to falsify the picture of her experience. In "Hours in a Library" written in 1916, after recalling the enthusiasm and eagerness aroused by a bookshop full of books fresh from the press, Leslie Stephen's daughter declares that "the living voices are, after all, the ones we understand the best..." and that they reveal to us "the mind and body of our time." And the "taste for bad books" which we acquire from them is neither so harmful nor so sterile as might be believed. "We owe a great deal to bad books ; indeed, we come to count their authors and their heroes among those figures who play so large a part in our silent life." And, faithful to the laws of alternation which, as we shall see, were to govern her life, she shows how the reading of classics and of contemporaries, of established authors and those amongst whom posterity will remember only a handful of names, complete and fertilize one another. It is highly probable that all her life she divided her attention between the two. In a list made on October 2, 1934, besides Shakespeare, Maupassant, Vigny and Saint-Simon we find Gide, Powys, Wells Brooke and Alice James.

—*Jean Guiguet*

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Comedy in Virginia Woolf

The proximity, or even the identification, of narrator and hero—leading up to the reader's proximity and identification—are in fact only a means, a technical device towards the achievement of humour, which here seems to attenuate the surface comedy by the evocation of a profound, antagonistic emotion. This attenuation, indeed, is only a superficial result. The duality, in this case the contrast between grief and its manifestations, profoundly alters the quality of the reaction it engenders. Humour, with Virginia Woolf, is neither a weakened nor a reticent form of comedy ; it is the simultaneous presentation of two aspects of reality : the outer and the inner, the surface and the depths, and the comic element consists in the anomaly, the incongruity or the contradiction between them ; but this element cannot be separated from the other emotions, feelings and ideas that spring from this double vision. It is on this account that identification with the hero is essential ; without it, the vision of inner reality would remain an abstraction and could not merge with the vision of outer reality. The two aspects would remain separate, in juxtaposition, one after the other, as in the opening of *The Voyage Out*. Such a division is favourable to an ordered presentation of experience, it is, in itself a classification. But precisely on this account, it is incompatible with Virginia Woolf's turn of mind ; rather than such implicit analysis, she chooses humour which, by its synthesis, restores the complexity and confusion that better befit the immediate date of experience.

—*Jean Guiguet*

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Selected Critical Questions With Answers

Q. 1. How significant a part does Lily's painting play in *To the Lighthouse*? How does she ultimately complete her picture?

Or

Q. 2. What view of art does Virginia Woolf project in *To the Lighthouse*?

Or

Q. 3. Give a critical assessment of Lily Briscoe's role in *To the Lighthouse*.

Or

Q. 4. Human sympathy is an essential pre-requisite for the artist to succeed. Comment.

Or

Q. 5. Attempt a brief character sketch of Lily Briscoe.

Epitome of the Creative Process

Lily Briscoe's role in *To the Lighthouse* is obviously extremely significant. She is an epitome of the life and work of an artist. Through her person, Virginia Woolf is diving deep into the complex process of artistic creation. Art, v·hether it be poetry or painting, brings forth the life-blood of the artist. It is extremely difficult to know from the finished product the travails and tribulations, the frustrations and hardships that the artist has gone through in his attempt to bring the work to fruition.

A Devoted Artist

Lily Briscoe, the painter, shows us what it takes to produce a picture. She is a devoted artist; her life's mission is painting.

So great is her devotion to art that she has given it primacy over every other vocation in life. One tends to suspect that she did not go into the usual institution of marriage and child-rearing partly because she felt that this would detract her from her creative pursuit. She takes time off from the busy humdrum of life and comes to live with the Ramsays at the Isle of Skye thinking that the serene sequestered surroundings would be more propitious for her work. Like a true artist she believes that a brush is the only ally in this life full of trivialities and mad pursuits.

Unable to Paint

In spite of her total dedication to art, Lily Briscoe is hard put to complete her picture. She is truly going through the pangs of creation. Art requires complete concentration, and concentration comes when the artist has purged herself or himself from the various contradictory pulls in her or his mind ; art requires a placidity of mind when the artist can put her or his heart and soul into the work. This is precisely the state of mind that Lily Briscoe is not able to achieve until late in the novel. She was not getting her picture right at all. She could not bring on the canvas what she vaguely thought and wanted to paint. In a way she was not very sure what she wanted to make of her picture. She was getting a whole host of hazy notions which she could not grasp and tame on her canvas. The most serious problem seems to have been created by an empty space. This space had to be filled and Lily Briscoe did not know how to fill it. She thought she might fill this vacancy in the foreground by moving a tree in the front. She thought of bringing the lines of a branch across. However, all this is at the level of tentative ideas ; she is not able to resolve the tangle. For one thing, if she carried out the proposed changes, the danger was that the unity of the work might be destroyed.

The Explanation

An artist has to work amidst people, amidst the ordinary commerce of life. Howsoever much one might yearn for seclusion, one really has to live the life around. In fact a pertinent question to ask here is whether art created in isolation from the squalor and dirt of life, its joys and its sorrows, its pains and its failures, and the hopes and the aspirations of the people around—can such an art in isolation from these things be a truly authentic art ? After all what is art ? Is it the solitary contemplation of the artist, or is it a reflection of life ? The idea of art springing in the mind of an artist and coming to light in the calm surroundings that the artist had created for himself, is absolutely erroneous. Such an art is bound to be pale and weak, subjective and eccentric. The life-blood of art is provided by the life actually led by the people. The artist must reflect the progressive urges of his times. He should be able to identify himself with the progressive movements in thought and action. Such an artist will be less likely to face frustrations and heart-breaks, which are so commonplace for a painter like Lily Briscoe.

Again and again Lily Briscoe despairs at her inability to complete her picture. In the midst of people and thoughts, she decides with a shudder to resume her work. Very often, she bends her energies to solve the problems vexing her, but to no avail. There seemed to be a creative inadequacy which did not let her dive deep into the picture. This, however, does not detract her from her dedication to painting. She has the perseverance to carry on with the picture for a decade and more and ultimately completing it. She was depressed, at times, that at forty four she was squandering her time away at the Ramsay household. Particularly after Mrs. Ramsay was dead, Lily regretted coming to the Isle of Skye. Mrs. Ramsay seemed to inspire her and keep her together. Now she was dead.

In the later part of the novel, Lily Briscoe gathers up all her energies and makes up her mind to complete the picture this time. But now one of the things that prevents her from bringing the picture straight is the disturbance caused by the people around. She felt particularly disturbed by Mr. Ramsay's presence. When he was around she felt uneasy and could not concentrate. He demanded sympathy and caused embarrassment. He seemed to say to her that she would not touch her brush and paints unless she had given him what he wanted. So long as he was near her, she could not paint. She had not yet been able to dissolve herself in the sense that she was not able to bridge the gulf between herself and the people around.

Love and Sympathy

A true artist should be motivated not only by the genuine urges but by a cause greater than herself. Art can be contemplation only in one sense, that is the artist has drawn herself out from her narrow self and become identified with the people around. In this mood of creativity, barriers break down, inhibitions evaporate and creativity clothes mankind in a single sheet.

It is only after she is able to sympathise with Mr. Ramsay after he has left for the lighthouse that the deadlock in Lily Briscoe's painting is broken. Onset of the feelings of love and sympathy releases her creative parts. With a curious physical sensation, she makes her first decisive stroke. The brush descends on the canvas a second time and then a third. Pausing and flickering, she attains a rhythmical movement, as if pauses were one part of the movement and strokes another. And all were related. So appeared lines on the canvas that enclosed the nasty vacant spot.

We get an idea of the artist at work as Lily paints. She loses consciousness of the world around being completely lost in her picture. And as she lost consciousness of name and personality, and of whether Mr. Carmichael or somebody else was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depth scenes, names, sayings, memories, and ideas like a fountain. She seemed to be sitting with

Mrs. Ramsay, when they had all gone to the beach ten years ago. Painting was a difficult thing to do. Only when one had cast off all mental strife, all reservations, and all irritants, and had melted with sympathy and love, could one catch the vision on the canvas, or write a poem.

Q. 6. Mrs. Ramsay is the centre that holds the novel together. Comment.

Or

Q. 7. With her charms Mrs. Ramsay is able to create harmony in the novel. Do you agree ?

Or

Q. 8. Will you regard Mrs. Ramsay as the ideal of a housewife ?

Or

Q. 9. Mrs. Ramsay is at once a foil to and a complement of her husband. Discuss.

Or

Q. 10. Do you agree with the proposition that Mrs. Ramsay is as powerful after her death as she is when she is alive ?

Or

Q. 11. Give a critical assessment of Mrs. Ramsay's role in the novel.

The Central Figure

Mrs. Ramsay is really and truly the central figure of *To the Lighthouse*. The first part of the novel is completely dominated by her. Everything and almost everybody seems to revolve round her. Structurally and psychologically, she provides a cohesive force which gives a sense of unity and meaning to the lives of the people around her.

The novel opens with the focus on Mrs. Ramsay, the centre' She is sitting at the window, which links the lawn with the indoor. People come and go, but she remains the point of reference, the mile-stone in the movement of the various characters. First to come to her are Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley. Mrs. Ramsay's impressions about these people as they impinge upon her consciousness fill out the scene for the reader. Similarly as Mr. Bankes and Lily Briscoe come back from their walk, they too, come again within her range of vision.

At the Isle of Skye, it is Mrs. Ramsay that holds the motley crowd together. From Lily Briscoe to Charles Tansley, there is a whole variety of people assembled there. These characters are full of their own complexes and inhibitions, and are seldom able to establish a rapport with one another. Living under the same roof, they are more like scattered stones. Somebody must bring these stones together, and carve out a building. This job of construction and reconstruction is performed by Mrs. Ramsay.

This is remarkably clear at the dinner party ; her role as a unifying force comes out most prominently here when everybody assembles for dinner towards the end of the first part of the novel. At this party, Mrs. Ramsay acts not only as a cementing force connecting various individuals to one another but she has also to engage herself with some of them. Communication is one of the most difficult jobs in life. Even when we like people, sympathise with their ideas, we find it hard to engage them. Inventing a topic of discussion or conversation is no less a creative art than painting for instance. The problem at the Ramsay household is particularly difficult, because the people assembled there are, many of them self-willed, self-centred, and some of them even eccentric. It is nothing short of a miracle that Mrs. Ramsay is able to weave them into a cohesive whole, even for a moment though. By a look she compels Lily to be considerate to Charles Tansley. As a result of this intervention, Tansley is brought out of his isolation, and gets the attention he so badly needs to feel at home. Mr. Carmichael is brought out of himself by the beauty of the bowl of fruit at the centre of the table.

But it is Mr. Ramsay who is completely dependent on his wife. She is one of the very few people who really understand his problem. He needs sympathy and encouragement and repeatedly comes to her to be reassured. As he reflects on his life and achievement, he comes to acknowledge his dependence on his wife and her possession of a power and strength different in kind from his own. Though Mrs. Ramsay is very often unhappy at the way in which her husband conducts himself, she has great regard for him. She really thinks that he is head and shoulder above the ordinary run of people. At the dinner party, she very much wishes that he intervenes and gives the discussion a direction which, she thought, it was lacking. One has to have real sympathy for a person if one is to play any constructive role in reassuring or rehabilitating him.

Once the party has been set into motion, Mrs. Ramsay can sit back and be an onlooker for a moment. But she alone can set the party in motion. This is her unique distinction and a very significant role in the novel.

Mrs. Ramsay has an incurable tendency to match-making. It is part of her trait of bringing people together. In match-making her experience is, of course, not always happy. At a number of places in the novel, there are references to her interest in binding

people in wed-lock. Minta-Paul affair is a case in point. She thought that it was her duty that they should be married ; she felt responsible for Minta's well-being and could not see her going about loose. That she was a force behind the marriage becomes clear when after the marriage has failed, Paul accuses her of having brought him to this miserable position. Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay has always been planning to tie Lily Briscoe to somebody in marriage.

The Perfect Hostess

Mrs. Ramsay is a perfect hostess. People wondered how, with their meagre income, she was able to feed and look after so many guests. Her own family was large enough, and Mr. Ramsay was not making any big sum of money out of his books. But a shrewd householder and a patient housewife that Mrs. Ramsay is, she comes out gloriously in this financially tight situation. It is not only the question of arranging for people's lodging and boarding, what is important about Mrs. Ramsay—and this marks her out from the rest of the people assembled at the Ramsay household—is that she is able to look after these guests to their satisfaction. They seem to be magnetically drawn towards her. She has ill-will against none. In fact she has sympathy and consideration for otherwise abhorred people like Charles Tansley, and tries to make him as comfortable as possible.

Kind and Considerate

Allied with her quality as a hostess is her kindness and consideration for the people around her, and her love and sympathy for the poor in particular. This is most remarkably brought out by the earnestness and effort with which she knits stockings for the poor lighthouse-keeper's son. She knows that the lighthouse-keeper leads a dreary, miserable life, and it would be some comfort for him to receive something by way of present. So great is her consideration for the poor boy that she identifies him with her own son James.

Mrs. Ramsay does not want to hurt anybody's feelings ; she would avoid disillusioning people. In so far as she can, she would like to make things pleasant and agreeable. Here she presents a foil to her husband. Mr. Ramsay ruthlessly shatters young James' hopes of going to the Lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay knows that this would shock the boy. Therefore, she not only does not share her husband's so-called realism, but positively rebukes him and Mr. Tansley for their cruelty and lack of understanding. Even when she herself knows that the trip to the Lighthouse may not come off, she does not discourage James. Mr. Ramsay is indignant with her for building false hopes. He is unable to appreciate that his wife does not want to dishearten the child.

As a result of this, the children, like everybody else, love and like Mrs. Ramsay much more than they love their father. In fact they hate him. Even though their father is an intellectual and a

scholar, the children think that their mother is infinitely superior to him. She is so much attached to her children that she does not want James or Cam to grow old. She was happy carrying a baby in her arms. Life had eternal problems of sufferings, death, and poverty, but in spite of all this she wanted people to marry and run their household.

A Charming Person

We have repeated references to Mrs. Ramsay's charm. Indeed, she has the whole of other sex under her protection. Their attitude towards her was trustful and reverential. She has a magnetic personality, and is called a charming person. One wonders what kind of beauty an old woman, the mother of eight children, can have. But she is repeatedly described as beautiful. She is a dominating person. For one thing, her age notwithstanding, she has considerable physical charm. But this alone could not explain her power and appeal. She has other graces too. She is very polite and hospitable ; she is helpful and kind. And she is always well-meaning. She could bear no incivility to her guests, to young men in particular.

Q. 12. Mr. Ramsay illustrates the inadequacies of intellectuals. Discuss.

Or

Q. 13. Is it correct to say that lack of success makes Mr. Ramsay a pathetic figure ?

Or

Q. 14. Between ruthless realism and comforting illusions, which one will you choose ? Illustrate from the character of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.

Or

Q. 15. Mr. Ramsay fails to win our sympathy. Comment.

Or

Q. 16. Bring out the salient features of Mr. Ramsay's character.

Intellectual Pursuits

Mr. Ramsay is the head of Ramsay family. He is a leading intellectual of his times. He has written a number of books, and has a splendid mind. Very few people in the whole of England had a range and subtlety of mind that Mr. Ramsay possessed. Philosophy is his principal subject of study. In answer to a question about the

content of his father's books, Andrew explains, "subject and object and the nature of reality." This is a profound philosophical problem, and requires mental powers of the highest order.

In Mr. Ramsay's life intellect predominates. As is quite understandable, reason gets the better of emotions. As he is pursuing a problem of great subtlety and complexity, small things tend to irritate him sometimes. The significance of what Mr. Ramsay is doing in his books can be seen from the fact that the problem of subject and object and the nature of reality works its way through the novel on three levels : human relations, metaphysics and aesthetics.

Mr. Ramsay, however, is far from being a complete success in life. In fact, this lack of hundred percent success is always gnawing at his heart. This is natural when one pursues a vocation out of selfish and personal considerations, where the dedication to the pursuit is not important in itself, but everything is judged by the consideration of success and failure. Because he is measuring his work with the yardstick of success and failure, he is often depressed. His last book, for instance, was not altogether successful. He has a feeling of failure and this makes him considerably unhappy. He ponders over his lack of success, tries to rationalise it, but at the end remains unsatisfied. He says that only one in a million achieves total success. Ordinarily people have to be content with partial success. But all this rationalisation leaves him an inadequate person, who violently comes to terms with himself, but remains broken and bruised. This contemplation over the course that his life has taken, makes him look pathetic, for rather than moving ahead with whatever he has been able to achieve, he ruminates over his failure and seems to be tragically stuck up.

Yearning for Sympathy

One of the results of his failure in life is that he is eternallv seeking props ; one of the things about Mr. Ramsay, which the novelist emphasises over and over again, and through the medium of more than one character, is Mr. Ramsay's insatiable hunger for sympathy. He wants to be assured that his life has been worthwhile, which in itself shows that it has not been so. He wants people to assure him that he is in the circle of life, that he is needed, and that his literary output is significant. This claim for sympathy he makes on all and sundry, but most so on his wife. She has to go out of the way to reassure him. He is almost begging for sympathy. This makes him pathetic indeed. Mere intellectual life seems to have left him barren. He wanted his barrenness to be made fertile. Mrs. Ramsay had to say that Mr. Tansley considered him the greatest metaphysician of the world. But he must have more than that ; he must be assured that he was needed all over the world.

His desire for sympathy extends to Lily Briscoe, and his children. In the last part of the novel, he stands like a small child before Lily Briscoe asking her silently for sympathy and human

warmth. Lily thinks that Mr. Ramsay had never given any thing to anybody. He was always a taker. Mrs. Ramsay had always given him ; so she herself would be forced to give him. In the course of their journey to the lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay turns to daughter Cam for sympathy, but fails to get it until the end, even though she seems to be melting for her father.

Mrs. Ramsay, however, thinks that her husband is a man of parts, a genius. There was something truly exceptional about him compared to the normal run of people around. She admired him, though she was not a little unhappy on account of his cringing nature that greatly embarrassed her. Only when he is leaving for the lighthouse Lily Briscoe thinks that Mr. Ramsay has overcome the desire for sympathy. He seemed to her as having entered some new region.

A Ruthless Realist

Mr. Ramsay is a realist who has no illusions about life, nor can he tolerate anybody else harbouring illusions. Because of this ruthlessness he overshoots the mark. The human and the emotional side of life gets ignored in the zeal for stark realism. Thus he is able to tackle life only particularly, which means a failure to comprehend life in its totality. When Mrs. Ramsay says that the wind might change direction and they might still be able to go to the lighthouse, the irrationality of her remarks greatly irritates him. The folly of women's mind particularly angered him. Virginia Woolf says, "He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered ; and now she flew in the face of facts, made the children hope what was utterly out of the question, in fact told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step." In this his intention is quite understandable. He wanted his children to know the hard realities of life and prepare for them ; he wanted them to face up to facts rather than being lulled into complacency.

His Tyranny

To his children Mr. Ramsay is a tyrant. This element of tyranny may be explained partly by his excessive concern for realism. The children, particularly James, did not like him, for he made sarcastic remarks and had a strange pleasure in debunking them. He poured ridicule on his wife too who was, according to the children, so much superior to him. He had some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement. He never changed a disagreeable world to suit the pleasure and convenience of any living mortal. This was greatly resented by the children. He rammed it down their throat that life was difficult and facts uncompromising. Though he wanted them to learn that life needed courage, truth and power to endure, he himself, to no mean extent, made their lives more difficult.

Particularly during their journey to the lighthouse, the hatred of James and Cam becomes very clear. They seem to have formed

a joint defence pact against him. They have decided to fight his tyranny decisively and jointly. James knew that his father would be curt and sharp with him. He had weighed his children down with his authority and gloom. So great is children's sense of persecution that James thought wishfully of escaping from the boat and being relieved of the burden of life.

Mr. Ramsay does not have sufficient understanding of the needs of his children. It is surprising that a leading intellectual of his times should not know that the children cannot be taught by mere authoritarianism. Everybody knows that love, sympathy and understanding are the surest means of dealing with human beings, particularly the children. Here in this respect Mr. Ramsay's ruthlessness seems to be highly exaggerated. Virginia Woolf appears to be deliberately trying to show that a mere intellectual approach is not adequate to the problem of life. A unity of thought and feeling, that is sympathy and reason, is needed to cope with them.

Conclusion

Though Virginia Woolf has tried to touch upon some tender, more human aspects of Mr. Ramsay, what strikes the reader most is his weakness and failure. One of the redeeming features in his character is his desire to protect. It is this desire that wins Cam back in the sail to the lighthouse. But ultimately his character is not a character of strength ; in fact, he is very often disgusting.

Q. 17. Persons and places in *To the Lighthouse* are not very significant. Comment.

Or

Q. 18. Fiction is truer than facts. Does this statement apply to *To the Lighthouse* ?

Or

Q. 19. Things in *To the Lighthouse* cannot be labelled. They are one thing and many things at the same time. Comment.

Or

Q. 20. Lighthouse stands for many things in the novel. Elaborate.

Three-fold Division

To the Lighthouse was published in 1927, twelve years after *The Voyage Out*. It is divided into three main parts : 'The Window' 'Time Passes', and 'The Lighthouse'. The first part is concerned with the events of one evening and night in mid-September of about

1910, and the third part with the events of one morning ten years later. Unity of place is preserved throughout, and the setting is at once precise and vague. It is a house at Finlay in the Skye Islands; but when Paul Rayleys thinks of slipping out of the house early in the morning to go all the way to Edinburgh and replace a brooch that Minta Doyle has lost, the reader may begin to think—although Paul's state of mind might account for his resolve—of the notorious seacoast of Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*; however, Virginia Woolf too was notorious for her lack of attention to factual accuracy, and the exact scene of the action is unimportant.

Persons and Places Unimportant

Indeed, the action itself might be considered equally unimportant. In the first part of the book James Ramsay wishes to go to the Lighthouse, but cannot because of bad weather; in the third part he finally makes the journey, but against his will. This is the central action of the novel. Parallel to it runs the progress of Lily Briscoe's painting. At first she cannot formalize her vision upon canvas; finally she succeeds in completing the picture, but not at all to her satisfaction. The climax of the novel—Mrs. Ramsay's death—is mentioned very casually in a parenthetical sentence; the catastrophe—Mr. Ramsay's arrival at the lighthouse and Lily's completion of her painting—comes as an exhausted afterthought. No act, no event can be pinned down: even Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, by far the longest scene in the book, is not self-contained, for it concludes with her own realization that the party had begun to end some time ago. Not an act or a series of acts, but action itself—movement rather than movements—is described by this novel.

The characters themselves are for the most part seen in action: Mr. Ramsay pacing up and down the terrace, Cam running widely and stopping only at her mother's call. In this movement three things alone remain fixed: Mrs. Ramsay, the Lighthouse, and Lily's painting. Even these must not be labelled for 'nothing was simply one thing'. So, for example, even the Lighthouse is both stark and misty. Arriving at the Lighthouse James remembers it as he had seen it when he was a child of six:

> The Lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye, that opened suddenly, and softly in the evening. Now—

James looked at the Lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it.

No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too.

The Lighthouse Symbol

This very important passage serves to comment upon the numerous interpretations of the Lighthouse symbol. Almost every

critic explains the Lighthouse differently—and almost every critic makes what would seem to be the mistake of finding the Lighthouse 'simply one thing.' H. K. Russell declares that the Lighthouse is the feminine creative principle ; that Mrs. Ramsay equals Bergson's 'intuition' equals Joyce's 'Anna Livia Plurabelle'. Joan Bennett calls the alternate light and shadow of the Lighthouse the rhythm of joy and sorrow, understanding and misunderstanding. Daiches says : The Lighthouse...standing lonely in the midst of the sea, is a symbol of the individual who is at once a unique being and a part of the flux of history. To reach the Lighthouse is, in a sense, to make contact with a truth outside oneself, to surrender the uniqueness of one's ego to an impersonal reality—surely a worthwhile comment. F. L. Overcarsh, in a detailed interpretation of the novel, avoids calling the Lighthouse simply one thing. He finds the novel as a whole an allegory of the old and new Testaments ; Mrs. Ramsay is Eve, the Blessed Virgin, and Christ ; Mr. Ramsay is, among other things, God the Father ; the Lighthouse is Eden and Heaven ; the strokes of the Lighthouse are the Persons of the Trinity, the third of them, long and steady, representing the Holy Ghost. Perhaps more precise than any of these interpretations is John Graham's statement that the Lighthouse as symbol has no one meaning, that it is 'a vital synthesis of time and eternity : an objective correlative for Mrs. Ramsay's vision, after whose death it is her meaning.

Q. 21. *To the Lighthouse* **expresses two kinds of truths. Elaborate.**

Or

Q. 22. The novel bears out the idea of truth held by Mrs. Ramsay. Comment.

Or

Q. 23. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay represent two different approaches to reality. Critically assess these approaches.

Two Kinds of Truth

To the Lighthouse is really the story of a contest between two kinds of truth—Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's. For Mr. Ramsay truth is factual truth ; for Mrs. Ramsay truth is the movement toward truth : since truth is always being made, and never is made, the struggle for truth is the truth itself. The form of this novel at once expresses and verifies Mrs. Ramsay's truth. According to Bergson, certainty can follow only from factual extension of knowledge resulting in scientific order ; such is the order which Mr. Ramsay seeks. Mr. Ramsay spatializes knowledge :

> If thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into as many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then Mr. Ramsay's splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it

had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q.........But after Q? What comes next? After Q there are a number of letters, the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance. Z is only reached once by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it would be something.

Here is a logical, scientific procedure toward truth.

Mrs. Ramsay's Truth

Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand, knows by intuition rather than by analysis, and is therefore able to know reality-mobility, qualitative rather than quantitative diversity, time instead of space, movement itself and not merely the path of movement in space.

Matter......has no duration and so cannot last through any period of time or change: it simply is in the present, it does not endure but is perpetually destroyed and recreated......Just as matter is absolute logical complexity, memory is absolute creative synthesis. Together they constitute the hybrid notion of creative duration whose 'parts' interpenetrate which, according to Bergson, comes nearest to giving a satisfactory description of the actual fact directly known which is, for him, the whole reality.

Mr. Ramsay—matter—and Lily Briscoe—memory—undergo such an 'interpenetration' in the novel's catastrophe, and by doing so give a satisfactory description of Mrs. Ramsay's truth.

The Window

'The Window' is a statement of that truth. This first part of the novel seems complete in itself. It begins: "Yes, of course if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay, and concludes, again with Mrs. Ramsay speaking: 'Yes, you were right. It's going to be wet tomorrow. You won't be able to go.' The conflict is projected as a question about the weather. It is a fact, stated by Mr. Ramsay at once, that 'it won't be fine'. Charles Tansley—'the little atheist', as he is called—backs up this fact. But Mrs. Ramsay will not accept it as truth, because it hurts James, who wants nothing more than to go out to the Lighthouse. Instead she says, 'But it may be fine—I expect it will be fine', and calls her husband's fact nonsense. At the conclusion of this part, when she agrees with her husband that it will rain tomorrow, it is not because she attaches importance to his truth, but because she knows that he wishes her to say 'I love you', and chooses to say it in this way. In neither case is the fact itself of any importance whatsoever to her.

The Contrast

Her disregard of factual truth enrages Mr. Ramsay. After all, he is right. Mrs. Ramsay's truth is one that must trample upon

her husband's, however ; but his truth—factual truth—is so shortlived that she can distort or deny it without compunction. He himself realizes its fragility ; in a generation, he thinks, he will be forgotten ; even Shakespeare will some day be forgotten. It is for this reason that his wife is so essential to him ; although he 'exaggerated her ignorance, her simplicity, for he liked to think that she was not clever, not book-learned at all', he nevertheless 'Wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house be made full of life... He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life.' Therefore he must from time to time leave off his metaphysical speculations and return to his wife, to 'life itself', for sympathy ; Mrs. Ramsay can communicate to her husband that 'if he put his implicit faith in her, nothing should hurt him ; however deep he buried himself or climbed high, not for a second should he find himself without her. So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by ; all was so lavished and spent.' Mrs. Ramsay's apparent illogicality is actually the certainty of intuition. For her husband her truth is a false truth, but without it he would perish. 'She knew then—she knew without having learnt. Her simplicity fathomed what clever people falsified. Her singleness of mind made her drop plumb like a stone, alight exact as a bird, gave her, naturally, this swoop and fall of the spirit upon truth which delighted, eased, sustained—falsely perhaps.' 'Falsely perhaps' because her perception of true time has not yet been proved correct. She has been seen only through a window, and the reader has seen her concept of truth only through the window of her own 'room'. She has identified her truth with the lighthouse. 'There is a coherence in things, a stability ; something......is immune from change, and shines out......in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby' ; this can be glimpsed at certain moments, and 'of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures'. Just as Mr. Ramsay's Z 'glimmers red in the distance', so the 'something' that Mrs. Ramsay feels stable shines like a ruby. Her way of meeting it is different from her husband's way—hers being really an end, and his a means. 'Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir......things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity ; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke.'

Seven times in this part of the novel, the phrase 'Someone had blundered' is repeated. Either Mr. Ramsay or Mrs. Ramsay is wrong; and the remainder of the novel shows that it is Mr. Ramsay who 'had blundered.'

Time Passes

The short second part, 'Time Passes', has been praised by almost every critic of the novel as a masterpiece of description.

According to Brewster and Burrell, 'It would be hard to find anything in twentieth century English prose to surpass (this part), others join them in ranking it one of the great passages of English prose. This is all very well, but to remove the part from the whole is to run the risk of ignoring its function. 'Time Passes' must not be thought of as a piece of impressionistic writing ; it is actually the testing of Mrs. Ramsay's vision by Mr. Ramsay's facts, and the apparent triumph of those facts. Simply, it describes the effects of ten years' time upon the little house. The books become mouldy ; Mrs. Ramsay's beloved garden is choked with weeds ; toads, swallows, and mice invade the rooms ; the wood rots ; above all, Mrs. Ramsay's truth—symbolized by the shawl she had wrapped around a frightening skull in the children's bedroom—falls victim to 'the facts'. Gradually the folds of the shawl loosen, so that the skull emerges a skull, and not the fairy garden she had called it when it annoyed Cam and James. There is no eternity, no permanence ; there are only dust, death, decay. Indeed, Mrs. Ramsay herself dies during this ten-year interval ; her son Andrew is killed in the war ; her daughter Prue dies of childbirth (just as Mrs. Ramsay had lived for childbirth). It would seem, then, that Mr. Ramsay was correct, for the facts of this spatialized time confirm his pessimism and prove his wife's optimism illusory. When Mrs. M'cNab, who has come now and then to dust the empty house, is suddenly asked to have it ready for occupancy, she labours for days with two other workers to repair the ravages of time. Finally Mr. Ramsay, the remaining children, Lily, and Mr. Carmichael (who has become a famous poet despite his addiction to drugs) return.

For Mrs. Ramsay, besides being a symbol for outgoing emotion, is a very real human being, with the inevitable self-deceptions and psychic compulsions. She tries to be honest, even to questioning if there is a taint of selfishness in her own selflessness : "For her own satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people might say of her, 'O Mrs. Ramsay ! dear Mrs. Ramsay...' and need her and send for her and admire her ?" And she is thus "made aware of the pettiness of some part of her, and of human relations, how flawed they are, how despicable, how self-seeking, at their best." In the same way she is forced to face the imperfections of her relations with her husband. She needs to venerate the male intellect and judgement, yet while she longs to rest contentedly on her husband's strength, she has to recognize repeatedly that he is really dependent on her. She tries to shut out the facts of his vanity and insecurity and that she must constantly supply assurance ; that he tyrannizes over the children and that "children never forget" ; and that she feels, "without hostility, the sterility of men". As a result she hates her own insincerity, but knows it is inescapable. Indeed no relationship in the book escapes that taint. Everyone, too, at one time or another—justifiably or unjustifiably—feels resentful toward others ; feels wounded or snubbed or guilty or hostile, or just hopeless about any real communication. Everyone, too, suffers the human dissatisfaction with his own lot, or the anguish of frustration and longing, feeling with Lily : "to want and not to

have—to want and want—how that wrung the heart, and wrung it again and again."

Q. 24. "Virginia Woolf had an almost mystic assurance of a 'reality' behind and within the facade of the temporal." Comment.

Or

Q. 25. Do you agree with the statement that in *To the Lighthouse* symbolic design controls everything ?

Or

Q. 26. Write a note on Virginia Woolf's use of symbols.

Reality

Her vision is more metaphysical than that of Henry James or Joyce in *A Portrait.* James' standard is a code of personal and social ethics, and Joyce's imagination is centered in the image of the artist escaping from bondage. But Virginia Woolf had an almost mystic assurance of a "reality" behind and within the facade of the temporal. "I want to put practically everything in......but made transparent." She explains, and we cannot doubt that she is speaking of her own writing when she describes Lily Briscoe's ambitions in paint : "Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent......but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron". When the critics praised her for all her subtleties and her delicate sensibilities and colourful prose, she confided to her diary : "What I want is to be told that it is solid and means something." Her aim in *To the Lighthouse* is to present what she feels as a central truth about human experience through the form of her art and in the contents of the individual minds that it creates.

In her diary she says she feels "reality" as "something abstract beside which nothing else matters : In which I exist and shall continue to exist," but she concludes : "How difficult not to go on making 'reality' this or that, whereas it is one thing." Elsewhere she defines it as "what is left in us of past times and of our loves and hates," and tells us : "Whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent." These are desultory comments in her own person, but how does she create "reality" in the book, where, as it is the central theme, it must emerge from the whole structure, as well as from the supporting experience of individual characters ?

The Symbols

This leads us into the complex and subtle symbolism of the book. In her diary, Virginia Woolf says she believes in tossing aside prepared symbols and using them simply as images, "never making them work out ; only suggest." The symbolic design controls everything, but it has no firm outline. It is rather like the "great scroll of

smoke" from the steamer that Lily looks at, "which stayed there curving and circling decoratively, as if the air were a fine gauze which held things together and kept them softly in its mesh......" The chief things "held together" in what she speaks of elsewhere as "an invisible elastic net" are four main symbols which pervade the book : the sea ; the lighthouse ; the personality of Mrs. Ramsay in life and in death ; Lily Briscoe's picture. These are all woven together into a central meaning, a revelation of what Virginia Woolf sees as the nature of life.

The Sea-Symbol

"The sea is to be heard all through it" she said, and the sea is the eternal flux of life and time in the midst of which we all exist. It constantly changes its character. To Mrs. Ramsay at one moment it sounds soothing and consoling like a cradle song, at other, "like a ghostly roll of drums remorsely beating a warning of death," it brings terror, sometimes its power, "weeping savagely in," seems to reduce the individual to nothingness, at others it sends up "a fountain of bright water" which seems to match the sudden springs of vitality in the human spirit.

The sea surrounds the island on which the action takes place, which suggests both the human race in general and the individual personality. The sea also surrounds the Lighthouse as it stands solitary sending out its intermittent beams. The Lighthouse holds a whole cluster of suggestions. To James Ramsay as a child it had seemed "a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye, that opened suddenly and softly in the evening." When he nears it in the boat at the end, it is a stark, straight tower, with windows in it and wash spread on the rocks to dry : "So that was the Lighthouse, was it ? No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing." The Lighthouse is a mystery, but it also concerns day-to-day living. It is at once distant and close at hand. It is manmade ; something permanent and enduring that man has built in the flux of time, to guide and control those at the mercy of its destructive forces. From this aspect it seems related to the human tradition and its values, which last from generation to generation and tell of both the unity and the continuity of man. Man tends its light, which sends its beams out over the dark waters to those on the island and so establishes communication with them and illumines them. To Mrs. Ramsay, as she sits knitting in the window, it seems at one moment the light of truth, stern, searching and beautiful, with which she can unite her own personality ; at another, steady, pitiless, remorseless, an enemy of any peace of mind ; or again a reminder of past ecstasy, thus bringing it into the present. But it always illumines and clarifies the human condition in some way.

The Title

The title of the book is *To the Lighthouse.* It is a quest for the values the Lighthouse suggests. The tower is frequently shadowed

in mist, its beams are intermittent in the darkness, the moments of assurance they bring are momentary, but upon these assurances "reality" rests. The book opens with a sentence hinting at two basic limitations to human fulfilment : "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow." "If" points to the uncertainty and insecurity of human fate, "tomorrow," to its imprisonment in time. The final sentence, however, is : "I have had my vision." Something stable has been revealed as a flash in the general doubt, something which seems to triumph over the eternal cycle of change. To the six-year-old James, his mother's words hold no qualifications ; they convey an extraordinary joy : "As if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch." The next moment, all this is dashed by the father he hates : "But it won't be fine." The longing to kill his father which then sweeps over James remains embedded in his nature until ten years later, when, most unwillingly and sulkily, he sails to the Lighthouse with him. As he skilfully steers the boat toward the tower on the rock, hating his father for his egotistical tyranny, Mr. Ramsay watches him and suddenly says triumphantly : "Well done" The world is transformed for James by this warming praise, the separation between himself and his father falls away in a sense of union and outgoing understanding. He wants his father to ask for something so that he may give it. Mr. Ramsay's response is left uncertain : "......he might be thinking. We perished, watch alone, or he might be thinking. I have reached it. I have found it : but he said nothing." At the same moment, however, Lily Briscoe, on the island, struggling with the aesthetic relationships in her picture, has the illusion of the loving presence of Mrs. Ramsay, who is dead, and the compulsion to share her emotion with Mr. Ramsay, whom she has always feared and disliked. That very morning she had denied him sympathy, though hating herself for her poverty of spirit. Looking now toward the Lighthouse, she knows that "Whatever she had wanted to give him when he left her that morning, she had given him at last." To reach the Lighthouse is to establish a creative relationship.

Just as Mrs. Ramsay, in spite of her flaws—and the flaws others invent for her to satisfy their own subjective needs—remains the symbol of creative vitality, so Mr. Ramsay stands as the symbol of the sterile, destructive barriers to relationship. Virginia Woolf must allow him some saving grace, but we are seldom allowed to see what has made Mrs. Ramsay give him her, and the moments of real communion between them are very few. In general, just as Mrs. Ramsay is described in images of fertility and the warmth and comfort of love and of harmony with others, Mr. Ramsay is evoked in images of sterility, hardness and cruelty and of deliberate isolation. He stands at the window "lean as a knife, narrow as the blade ...," full of the 'twang and twitter" of nervous tension ; he is "the beak of brass, barren and bare...the arid scimitar of the male", which plunges into Mrs. Ramsay's "fountain and spray of life" ; he is the wagon wheel that James imagines going blindly over a person's foot,

leaving it purple, crushed. He continually dramatizes himself as an heroic lonely figure, the leader of a lost expedition in the mountains or the Arctic or the desert. While he is valiantly struggling to the death on a lonely quest, he quotes suitable tags of verse, visualizing himself in the Light Brigade at Balaklava, "stormed at by shot and shell" because "someone had blundered," or perishing alone like Cowper's Castaway. Only he can never keep up the pose ; always in actuality or in imagination, with his insatiable craving for sympathy, he flies to women to be soothed and reassured. Mrs. Ramsay reverses his intellect but to Virginia Woolf that too is barren. She makes him envisage as an alphabet of single letters which can be toiled through by plodding perseverance. He knows, though, that this is not the way of genius, the inspired, "who miraculously, lump all the letters together in a flash." Knowledge is fragmented, wisdom and vision are wholeness and harmony.

Q. 27. What impact does Mrs. Ramsay have on the lives of people after her death ?

Or

Q. 28. Mrs. Ramsay's presence is felt throughout the book. Elaborate.

Or

Q. 29. Discuss Mrs. Ramsay's role at the dinner party.

Creative Spirit of Mrs. Ramsay

It is the assurance of the continued presence of the creative spirit of Mrs. Ramsay in the lives of other characters which gives Lily her final "vision," and in directly personal terms, as well as her importance as symbol, Mrs. Ramsay pervades the whole book. She is above all the creator of fertile human relationships, symbolized by her love of match-making and her knitting ; and of warm comfort, symbolized by her green shawl. Draped first over the frame of a picture of the Madonna and Child, it is then put over her shoulders when she strolls with her husband, and later used to cover up the skull in the children's bedroom. Left behind in the deserted house, it loosens, fold by fold, and falls to pieces. But these qualities are illustrated concretely in the scenes with her children, her husband, her friends and guests, or anyone in trouble or pain. As Lily recalls after her death : "Even the cynical and self-centered Charles Tansley has a vision of her stepping through fields and flowers and taking to her breast buds that had broken and lambs that had fallen." When her husband craves sympathy and reassurance, James feels her spirit rise "in a rosy-flowered fruit tree laid with leaves and dancing boughs." At the end of that scene, when as "fountain and spray of life" she has refreshed "the beak of brass, barren and bare" of her husband, and he has gone "like

a child who drops off satisfied," though she is exhausted by the life-giving effort, she experiences "the rapture of successful creation."

The Dinner Party

At the beginning of the dinner party, again, she is in a mood of spiritual depletion : "She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything."

As they sit at the table "nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her." But as her personality warms to her task, the party, which has been a collection of resentful egos, sheathing their true feelings in empty social insincerities, becomes a harmony of good fellowship. Then the sense of "reality" visits her, in what is perhaps the most memorable and characteristic passage in the book :

> Just now (but this cannot last, she thought, dissociating herself from the moment while they were all talking about boots) just now she had reached security ; she hovered like a hawk suspended, like a flag floated in an element of joy which filled every nerve of her body fully and sweetly, not noisly, solemnly rather, for it arose, she thought, looking at them all eating there, from husband and children and friends ; all of which rising in this profound stillness (she was helping William Bankes to one very small piece more......) seemed now for no special reason to stay there like a smoke, like a fume rising upward, holding them safe together.
>
> ...There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity ; as she had already felt about something different once before that afternoon ; there is a coherence in things, a stability ; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby......Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures.
>
> "Yes," she assured William Bankes, "there is plenty for everybody."
>
> "Andrew," she said, "hold your plate lower, or I shall spill it."...Here, she felt, putting the spoon down, was the still space that lies about the heart of things, where one could move or rest ; could wait now......listening her whole weight upon what......her husband was saying about the square root of one thousand two hundred and fifty-three. That was the number it seemed, on his watch.

This moment, when Mrs. Ramsay experiences the sense of assurance and joy is inextricably interwoven with the most commonplace surface moments. It occurs in the midst of talking about boots,

reproving one of the children, serving the meat, listening to her husband on square roots. The timeless and time coexist. We pass from the assurance of permanence to Mr. Ramsay's watch : from helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece of beef, to eternity—where even the syntax of the sentence encloses the concrete action within the universal significance. Mrs. Ramsay feels above everything, in a different element, transcending the mundane, communicated in the images of the hawk, the flag, the smoke ; and yet she is in the centre of husband, children, friends, food and general conversation, and "the whole is held together."

Conspicuous By Her Absence

When the party is over, Lily feels : "directly she (Mrs. Ramsay) went a sort of disintegration set in ; they wavered about, went different ways..." And when Mrs. Ramsay is dead and Lily comes back, she has the same sensation : "how aimless, how chaotic, how unreal it was...... a house full of unrelated passions." As she sets to work on her picture she remembers a scene from the past of herself and Charles Tansley on the beach squabbling and making friends again and Mrs. Ramsay's presence.

But what a power was in the human soul she thought. That woman sitting there......resolved everything into simplicity ; made these angers, irritations fall off like old rags ; she brought together this and that and then this and so made......this moment of friendship and liking—which survived, after all these years complete... and there it stayed in the mind affecting one almost like a work of art.

She pauses a moment while the old unanswerable question : What is the meaning of life ? darkens over her. But this time she finds the answer.

The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark ; here was one......herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave ; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together ; Mrs. Ramsay saying, "Life stands still here" ; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent—this was something in the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape ; this eternal passing and flowing......was struck into stability.

Q. 30. Write a note on the theme of permanence in the novel.

Or

Q. 31. Do you think the maxim, art ensures permanence, applies to *To the Lighthouse* ?

Or

Q. 32. What is the significance of repeated references to poetry in *To the Lighthouse* ?

Or

Q. 33. The creative spirit of man overcomes the destructive tendencies of nature. Comment.

Or

Q. 34. Write a note on Mrs. M'cNab's role in *To the Lighthouse*.

Harmonizing Human Relationships

Lily sees that Mrs. Ramsay's gift of harmonizing human relationships into memorable moments is "almost like a work of art," and the book art is the ultimate symbol for the enduring "reality". In life, as Mrs. Ramsay herself well knows, relationships are doomed to imperfection, and are the sport of time and change ; but in art the temporal and the eternal unite in an unchanging form—though, as in Lily's picture, the form may be very inadequate. We cannot doubt that Lily's struggles with the composition and texture of her painting are a counterpart of Virginia Woolf's tussels and triumphs in her own medium, but she chooses poetry as the image that reminds mankind that the ever-changing can yet become immortal. Just before the dinner party breaks up Mr. Ramsay starts quoting a poem (Luriana Lurilee by a forgotten nineteenth-century poet, Charles Elton). It seems to crown the harmony of the evening : everyone feels the same "relief and pleasure ;" the poet seems the voice of mankind giving the words for what men feel. Later that evening, as her husband reads Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Ramsay reads poetry. It arouses in her the sensuous impressions of lights and flowers, the sensation of climbing and rhythmical swinging out of and above her life of doing ; it creates the sense of wholeness that has come to her only in fugitive moments.

"Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose," she read, and so reading she was ascending, she felt...on to the summit. How satisfying ! How restful ! ......And then there it was, she held it in her hands, beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete, the essence sucked out of life and held round here—the sonnet.

Mr Carmichael's Poetry

In a way, Mr. Carmichael, the poet, really rounds off the book better than the rather unconvincing completion of Lily's picture. He is a symbolic figure ; his is the only mind we never enter. When Lily has her impulse of compassion toward Mr. Ramsay, and we have seen the scene at the Lighthouse itself between him and the

children, Mr. Carmichael comes puffing up to join Lily. By simply saying, "They will have landed," it seems to her that he has some how brought together and answered all that she has been feeling about the quest for meaning, for permanence, for harmony. He is, as it were, poetry itself.

He stood there as if he were spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind ; she thought he was surveying, tolerantly and compassionately, their final destiny. Now he has crowned the occasion, she thought, when his hand slowly fell, as if she had seen him let fall from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodel which, fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth.

The Chaotic Life

In the first and last sections of the book, the "bolts of iron" which, to Virginia Woolf, are the permanent and enduring things are revealed solely through the feathery and evanescent surface of the immediate moment of living. Between them, to bridge the ten-years gap, is the section "Time Passes". Some of this is a tour de force of lyrical evocation ; beautiful writing, but almost too mannered in its elaborately cadenced and image-strewn passages. Its "meaning," however, supports the rest of the book, though the whole perspective of vision changes. From the immediate process of living in the outer and inner experiences of a group, we are removed to a distance, contemplating the sea, the island and the house as time relentlessly passes. From this view, the individual shrinks. The death of Mrs. Ramsay, in one way the most important event in the book, becomes a parenthesis. Man, dwarfed into insignificance, asks his questions of meaning in the presence of the vast cyclical moods of physical nature. He finds himself baffled by the universal oppositions of creation and destruction, light and darkness, clarity and confusion. Trying to relate himself to these forces, he swings from an assurance of some purpose, to the conviction of complete alienation, or of a mindless chaos totally indifferent to his existence. Coming closer then to the island, we watch the house and garden falling into ruin, the flowers choked with weeds and briars, rats gnawing the woodwork, swallows nesting in the drawing room and plaster falling from the ceilings, while the Lighthouse beam connects with nothing as it stares over the beds and walls.

But as the house, "sinking, falling", seems doomed, it is saved : "There was a force working."

Mrs. M'cNab

A message has come that the family is coming back. The force that sets to work is the human instinct to arrest corruption and decay, to make the disordered fertility of nature obey its disciplines, to direct its energies toward a purpose. It is traditional civilization. Its first representatives here are not very highly

developed specimens of the human race—Mrs. M'cNab and Mrs. Bast, the cleaning women. Yet the description of Mrs. M'cNab, in spite of her clumsiness and crudity, contains the ideas of light and directed action: "Mrs. M'cNab, when she broke in and lurched about, dusting, sweeping, looked like a tropical fish oaring its way through sun-lanced waters." Hobbling and toothless, she sings as she works seeming "persistency itself, trodden down but springing up again". She is a part of the unquenchable spirit of man. She and Mrs. Bast stay Time's corruption and rot: they reinstate the traditions of creative civilization, of social community, of technical achievement: "fetched up from oblivion all the Waverly novels and a tea-set one morning: in the afternoon restored to sun and air a brass fender and a set of steel fire-irons," and won "a magnificent conquest over taps and bath." As they mop and scour "some rusty laborious birth seemed to be taking place."

Mrs. M'cNab, being human, also possesses memory, which keeps the past alive in the present. She comes into the house, which has stood all these years "without a soul in it," and the sight of Mrs. Ramsay's clothes and possessions bring back to her vivid pictures of Mrs. Ramsay's warmth and good fellowship. Soon relationship establishes itself again between past and present, between men and women and between man and nature. Mrs. M'cNab and Mrs. Bast are joined by Mrs. Bast's son, who catches the rats and scythes the grass. When they have left, things seem "mysteriously related......somehow belonging." The human story has been reborn.

Personality

Since "reality" is the sense of harmonious relation, its most insidious enemy is the human lack of relation, and the seeming impossibility of establishing it satisfactorily. This inescapable fact permeates every consciousness we enter. For one thing, so much of personality is submerged, dwelling in "that loneliness which is the truth about things" and never attaining overt expression: "Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at the moment of intimacy?" thinks Lily. Then personality can never be a fixed, objective thing: it lives in shifting emotions, sensations, daydreams, and in clashes with the personalities of others. Each consciousness is subtly changed by the company it keeps, each is at the mercy of mood, each seeks to supply its own psychological needs by its attitude to others. Lily, for instance, knows she uses Charles Tansley as a whipping boy:

> Her own idea of him was grotesque......Half one's notions of other people were, after all, grotesque. They served private purposes of one's own.

Lily sees how Mrs. Ramsay, with all her good intentions, is blind to some things in Lily herself, and in Mr. Carmichael and Mr. Bankes, giving them all the wrong kind of pity: "it was one of

those misjudgements of hers that seemed to be instinctive and to arise from some need of her own rather than of other people."

To the Lighthouse was published in 1927, the fifth of Virginia Woolf's eight novels, and is generally considered the finest ; the one in which she brought her method to its delicate perfection. It is indeed a wonderful piece of workmanship. Her foundation of ideas is "clamped together" in the symbolic structure she chose to suggest it. At the same time the "feathery, evanescent" nature of consciousness—the permeation of the present by the past, the outer by the inner, the currents uniting personalities and dividing them, the moments when things come together and fall apart, the inter-mingling of the emotions and the senses, all the mazy motions of reverie—all this is vividly revealed. Her characters all come to life, as we see into their own minds and into their images in the minds of others. We constantly recognize the truth of her psychological insights. Her mastery of her medium and her riches of concrete metaphorical suggestion are everywhere. Unquestionably she was a "professional", evolving a new form of fiction and creating a masterpiece in it.

Any criticism must center on how much of "felt life" this form of fiction is capable of holding. "I want to put practically every-thing in...but made transparent." What does Virginia Woolf not put in ? In one of her reveries Mrs. Ramsay meditates on some of the terrible aspects of life :

> There is no reason, order, justice : but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit ; she knew that no happiness lasted : she knew that.

None of these things enters the book ; but then Jane Austen also excluded all powerful emotion. Virginia Woolf provides no comprehensive social structure to acquiesce in or rebel from ; but Emily Bronte excluded that too. No, the one thing we really miss is the lack of any progressive action involving moral and emotional choices and decisions ; any pattern of relationships being shaped and directed by such action. In all the other books we watch the characters making their lives ; in *To the Lighthouse* we see very clearly what they have made of them, but they are forced to remain static ; it is all expansion without progression.

This, however, is how Virginia Woolf sees life. James, in the boat going to the Lighthouse, "began to search among the infinite series of impressions which time had laid down, leaf upon leaf, fold upon fold, softly, incessantly upon his brain." To Virginia Woolf it is this ceaseless fall of the atoms upon the consciousness that creates human identity. In the book we live among these myriad impressions, from the past and in the immediate present, which have patterned personality and from which the texture of experience is woven. Our insights are sharpened, our senses delighted. The moral values are there too ; we look through the transparent "luminous halo" and

know in a general way what Virginia Woolf sees as the springs of human good and human evil. We believe in the moments of heightened consciousness which seem to transcend time, and accept, again in a general way, the analogy with the "wholeness, harmony and radiance" of a work of art. But what we are shown lacks substance and particularity. We miss the conflict of wills and the dynamic movement which the method forbids ; reactions can never be as powerful as actions, or impressions as events. In *The Portrait of a Lady* or *A Portrait of the Artist* we live a great deal in the inner world of consciousness, and important themes are embodied in current imagery and symbolic structure. But these are reinforced by an interplay of action creating character, and character originating action, and are carried forward with seeming inevitability toward a resolution. The pure "stream of consciousness" method excludes this, and that is probably why it has not survived. It founders on that bedrock necessity which E. M. Forster laments though accepts : "The novel must tell a story."

Q. 35. Virginia Woolf's claim to contemporary significance rests precisely on her communicating the lonely struggle of people, and on her working out the relationship between individuals. Discuss.

Or

Q. 36. Virginia Woolf stood apart from her age. Comment.

Or

Q. 37. What picture of the inter-war England do we get from the novels of Virginia Woolf ? Discuss.

A Work of Universal Significance

Virginia Woolf is said to have "stood apart from her age, for she had no part or parcel with the noisy traffickings of the years between the wars." Virginia Woolf, it is argued, was interested more in investigating and portraying the inner realities of human mind, moving from the husk of life to its kernel and as such the external world, the cross-currents of social and political life and things like the great depression are conspicuous by their absence in her works. In short, this would amount to saying that Virginia Woolf's novels do not mirror her age.

A significant work of art may or may not win immediate approbation, but to be significant at all, it must in some direct or indirect way have contemporary significance. Even a work of universal significance is necessarily a work of contemporary significance. The plays of Shakespeare are the case in point. Of course this does not mean that a great writer always engages himself in social criticism. It interprets and expresses the contemporary truth which is more

than mere social criticism. To find out the truth and to express it correctly means that the significant work of art should find out and express correctly a relationship—the relationship between subject and object, the subject being the whole consciousness of the contemporary man, the object being his whole environment—physical, intellectual and spiritual. A writer should be able to give us an insight into the essentials of his age—what is it that makes it distinct from another age, its essential form and colour, the way it looks at its universe, the contemporary mood. A work of universal significance is above a work of mere contemporary significance ; the former includes the latter but the opposite may or may not be true.

Contemporary Significance

The statement that Virginia Woolf stood apart from her times, is not correct. Virginia Woolf's work is a work of considerable contemporary significance. The period between the two great wars was a period of transition, a period of breaking up and settling down, "a sort of cultural week-end between two full weeks of full time cultural activity." The two days of the week-end stand for the twenties and the thirties respectively of this century. And there is a considerable difference between these two decades. The imaginative literature of the twenties is not so much of sociological significance ; it does not concern itself with the study of man mainly as a member of a community. The world of *The Waste Land* and the *The Hollow Men* is world of individuals and not one of a community. For, by definition for a community to exist, there must be some common purpose, and accepted common values. A thoroughly disillusioned society is essentially a disintegrated society, a mere aggregates of individuals. This is the picture one comes across in the early novels of Aldous Huxley too ; it is a picture of society without common aspirations. These common aspirations were ultimately provided by the logic of historical forces, by the dole and by Hitler. But until then, age lacks a frame-work of common belief and the aspirations of the artist are divorced from the aspirations of the "social man." Consequently the great men of this age are, by and large, either artists or social thinkers, but not both. In the twenties, they are artists and in the thirties they are social thinkers.

The Lonely Struggle of People

It was in the twenties that Virginia Woolf produced the best of her creative part of work. To be truly representative of its age this work could only communicate the "orts, scraps and fragments" of a disintegrated society. It had to concentrate upon the personal unit either in its relation with other personal units, or in its lonely struggle to work out its own destiny in the face of "supersocial forces", of time and death. And Virginia Woolf's claim to contemporary significance rests precisely on her communicating the lonely struggle of people, on her working out the relationship between individuals, (who, since they do not know themselves sufficiently well cannot form any rapport with each other) and on her treatment of the

themes of time and death. In ***Mrs. Dalloway***, Clarissa Dalloway is apparently very sociable, expert in giving frequent parties. But in fact, she is terribly lonely. She finds nothing common between herself and the people around—her husband, Sally Seton, Bradshaws. Ironically, Septimus Warren Smith is the man with whom she has a great deal in common. And Septimus' station in life is very different from hers ; both of them are lonely, but both unite in death. On hearing of Septimus' death, Mrs. Dalloway, though taken by storm, commends the young man for his courage. Death, she says, is deliverance. She would herself be too glad to have this deliverance, as she could well have had it. When we remember that in the original plan of the novel, it was she and not Septimus who was to die. His death is only a little more subtle treatment of the theme of death.

Did Not Stand Apart From Her Age

If by standing apart from her age, we mean that in her writings, she is aloof from the contemporary scene in its material manifestations, the problems of business industry, and politics, and events of such vital concern as the rise of fascism, the charge is true. However, this a very narrow interpretation of contemporary significance ; by this criterion Jane Austen would also be said to have "stood apart from her age". She wrote of the small scene and relationships between people which she understood and in which she was interested. Virginia Woolf did something of the same kind. Although it is true that she wrote of extraordinary rather than ordinary people, the people are in every case very fair and credible specimen of the people of their age. Of course the times were radically different. Against a background of settled beliefs which Jane Austen's age had, Mrs. Dalloway would appear to be an incredible figure, in a world, where man had at least got down to the bed of consciousness, she is quite real. When the society of the age has no recognisable norms, the extraordinary becomes normal.

Virginia Woolf did not stand apart from her times in the sense that she did not neglect the fundamental law of literature that is, that it should have spiritual significance to the age and the people for which it is written. If she had violated that law, no serious reader would have been interested in her work. David Daiches, however, thinks otherwise. He says, "The themes of time, death and personality that run through ***Mrs. Dalloway*** as many of Virginia Woolf's novels are not in themselves unreal or insignificant ; but when a twentieth century novelist tries to present these themes through a picture, however, refined, of post-war London society, they may become insignificant or unreal. True, a work of art, once accomplished, stands on its own legs, and is not good in one century and bad in another, but that does not mean that the artist is free to ignore the intellectual climate of his time in creating a work. You can bring your world into your study and deal with it in complete abstraction or you can go out to meet it and surrender freedom to substance. There are unfortunate extremes in both procedures, but

latter is the safer way—one wonders if Mrs. Woolf's conception of the novel in terms of poetry is not an excuse for remaining in her study."

"The lyrical mood has many disguises, but its basis, like that of the metaphysical mood, is egotism." He goes on to say that, "egotism can be a virtue in art but it depends on the author's right to speak for others." David Daiches is right to the extent he points out some of the weaknesses of Virginia Woolf's art—her highly individual angle of approach, the rarified and the peculiar atmosphere in which she sees her vision of life. But, as R. L. Chambers says, this vision was vouchsafed to her in highly individual age when egotism was the mark of all original art in a higher degree than at any other period in Western European culture. In that age of crumbling conventions, every artist was left, as if, to share up in the ruins for himself. There is no denying that Virginia Woolf has egotism and that she wrote, alone but one can quite understand it because it was in this way alone that she could come closer to the "quick of the mind" in that lovely age. How can somebody be representative of an age which refuses to have representatiyes ? The best one can do is to speak for oneself.

Q. 38. Do you agree with the view that Virginia Woolf is not a systematic critic ?

Or

Q. 39. Give an estimate of Virginia Woolf as a critic.

Or

Q. 40. Virginia Woolf's practice as a writer of fiction derives from her theories on the subject. Discuss.

The Common Reader

To say that Virginia Woolf took herself seriously as a critic is not to imply that her critical work is in any way pretentions, and that she indulges her talent for it freely and confidently. The very title that she chose *The Common Reader* indicates that as a critic she regarded herself as something of an amateur. The motto is from Johnson's life of Gray : "...I rejoice to concur with common reader : for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be generally decided all claim to poetical honours." Virginia Woolf's claim to be Dr. Johnson's common reader is somewhat over-modest : she was certainly much more learned and much more sensitive than that character as Johnson conceived him. Her own conception of the common reader is rather different from the learned doctor's, as we gather from her remarks in the preface to the first series :

> The common reader, as Dr. Johnson implies, differs from the critic and the scholar. He is worse educated, and

nature has not gifted him so generously. He reads for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of other. Above all, he is guided by an instinct to create for himself, out of what ever odds and ends he can come by, some kind of whole—a portrait of a man, a sketch of an age, a theory of the art of writing. He never ceases, as he reads, to run up some ricketily ramshackle fabric which shall give him the temporary satisfaction of looking sufficiently like the real object to allow affection, laughter and argument. Hasty, inaccurate and superficial, snatching now this poem, now that scrap of old furnish without caring where he finds it or of what nature it may be so long as it serves his purpose and rounds his structure, his deficiencies as a critic are too obvious to be pointed out : but if he has, as Dr. Johnson maintained, some say in the final distribution of poetical honours, then, perhaps, it may be worth while to write down yet contribute to so mighty a result.

Instinct to Create

This "instinct to create" which Virginia Woolf sees as a characteristic of the common reader is hardly a criterion of amateur criticism in general but it is a very notable characteristic of her own critical writing. For Virginia Woolf is not a systematic critic, who endeavours to analyze the nature and structure of work of art with a view to assessing each in the light of some general principles. Her aim is to communicate a certain insight about a work, an impression of a writer or of an age, a suggestive or stimulating idea that is adumbrated but never fully developed. Just as in her fiction she is not concerned to create a patterned piece of action whose significance is determined, in the traditional manner, by the rise and fall of clear-cut events, but constructs her novels in order to present as climax the moment of insight, the sudden vision which makes the trivial significant, so in her criticism she avoids the application to individual cases, and devotes her attention to illustrating, briefly and suggestively, the mood of writer, the intellectual climate of an age, or some specific problem in poet's life or work or background.

Historical and Pure Aesthetic Criticism

She does not choose between historical criticism and pure "aesthetic" criticism : she moves freely from one to the other, but is saved from confusion, and from confusing her readers, by her complete awareness, at any given moment, of exactly what she is doing. Some of the sketches are purely biographical or historical in which she communicates to the readers the feeling of a particular environment. At other times she takes a single point—the nature of the essay, the predicament of modern fiction—and talks round it, suggestively, provocatively, and always interestingly. There is a conversational tone in most of these essays ; the author addresses the reader personally, and praise flows with smoothness and apparent informality.

Not a Systematic Critic

Her criticism has not the consistency or richness of a systematic critic living in a stable civilization : it has neither Dr. Johnson's assurance nor Coleridge's profundity ; but it is always illuminating, always fresh, always honest. Sometimes she simply communicates the substance of a work in a series of carefully organized impressions ; and of course the impressions are tendentious, they are her impressions, they are result of reading the work in one way only, but she always admits this and communicates the insight for what it is worth. Or she will take an idea, and play with it for a certain time before putting it down, as in her essay *On Not Knowing Greek*, sometime the point is interesting but not, perhaps, very important.

An Impressionistic Critic

Her criticism is impressionistic in a sense, but in the best sense. She does not, as so many critics have done, confuse autobiography with criticism, but notes certain responses she has had to books and authors and tries to discover what it was in the work or the author that accounts for those responses. The answer may be given in historical or psychological terms ; she may give the reader a picture of the writer's environment or discuss some aspect of his personal life or the answer may be more purely critical, dwelling on the way Sidney constructed his sentences ; or it may be both, as when she relates Sir Thomas Browne's style to his character. Any description of her own responses is always preliminary to discovering their causes, and according to the point of view she adopts for the moment, the cause can be of many different kinds. She saves herself from dogmatism by never suggesting that her account gives the whole cause : she is simply discussing one causal factor which interests her and in which she tries to interest the reader. Every now and again, as in her discussion of the Elizabeth a dramatist's view of reality or of the methods of contemporary novelists, she raises a question which is of particular concern to her as a novelist and the tone becomes more serious and eloquent.

The Depiction of Her Unique Personal Vision

It is partly the sense of this problem that led her to continual experiment in method of writing fiction. This and her sense of the importance of the unique personal vision which it is the duty of the novelist to communicate as effectively as he can, were two of the most important factors in her work as novelist, and we see them discussed frequently in her criticism. She praises De Quincey for his ability to combine the record of external events with that profounder kind of writing in which "suddenly the smooth narrative parts fly asunder, and opens beyond arch, the vision of something for ever twined, for ever escaping, is revealed, and time stands still." She defines a masterpiece as a book, "where the vision is clear and order has been achieved." We get some insight into the function of poetic reverie and dialogue in *Between the Acts* in her remarks

that "Verse in Arcadia performs something of the function of dialogue in the modern novel. It breaks up the monotony and strikes a highlight."

Conclusion

Perhaps most effective of Virginia Woolf's critical writings are those passages in which she sums up the atmosphere of a character of a period. This is not strictly criticism, at all, but a species of history. She is particularly fond of talking of minor characters, whose words are today unreal and whose names are almost forgotten, and out of their words (particularly their letters and diaries) weaving together a picture of their way of life, their attitude, their environments. Her vivid pictures of Geraldine Jewsbury, of Parson Woodforde and the Reverend John Skinner, are not based on any extensive original research, but from the character's own writing, from which she selects, eptitomizes, summarises with consummate skill. As a reviewer she seldom attempted a clear cut discussion of the values and nature of the work in hand (she did that only when the work clearly reinforced or contradicted the theories inplicit in her own practice: to let Galsworthy for example get away without some censure would be to endanger her own position, and similarly she praised the early Conrad). She preferred to recreate for the reader the impression which the author had made on her. This is why she was expelled as reviewer of biographical and antiquarian works: she could communicate in a short article the essential meaning of a long biography, summing up the life and character of an individual with vividness and economy. This is to regard the functioning of a reviewer not as evolutions but as a lively communication of the essence of the book reviewed, which is surely a legitimate point of view.

If we grant that Virginia Woolf's critical essays are only rarely criticism in the strict academic sense, we have to concede that they are frequently history, biography, discourses or arguments, maintained at a high level of intelligence and sensitivity. Leslie Stephen, her father, had called his essays "Hours in Library", and the title might have well stood for those of her daughter. They are both in the same tradition: in both writers the form of the essay is determined by the particular problem under discussion, the method shifts with the subject matter, the individual insight matters more than the systematic presentation of a philosophy, and biography tends to oust criticism. Virginia Woolf differs from her father in that her insights are subtler, her visions are sensitively seen and presented, and she is much more conscious of the difficulties of attaining and communicating awareness of what is significant in experience.

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Chronology of Important Dates

1882 Virginia Woolf born (25 January), at Hyde Park Gate, Kensington, to Julia and Leslie Stephen.

1904 After Leslie Stephen's death, her mother having died in 1895, Virginia Woolf moved to 46 Gordon Square. There the "Bloomsbury Group" first formed itself.

1905 Virginia Woolf began publishing reviews and essays.

1912 Married Leonard Woolf.

1915 Virginia Woolf moved from Bloomsbury to Hogarth House. Published *The Voyage Out.*

1916 Virginia Woolf resumed periodical writing.

1917 Woolfs bought a small hand printing press.

1919 *Night and Day* published. Woolfs took as a week-end cottage Monks House in the village of Rodmell, close to the Ouse, in Sussex.

1921 Published *Monday or Tuesday.*

1922 Published *Jacob's Room.*

1924 Woolfs and Hogarth Press moved from Richmond to Tavistock Square.

1925 Published *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Common Reader*.

1927 Published *To the Lighthouse.*

1928 Published *Orlando : A Biography.*

1931 Published *The Waves.*

1925-31 Virginia Woolf won recognition as one of the most important modern writers.

1932 Published *The Common Reader : Second Series.*

1933 Published *Flush : A Biography.*

1937 Published *The Years.*

1938 Published *Three Guineas.*

1940 London house bombed ; lived until Virginia Woolf's death at Monks House. Published *Roger Fry : A Biography.*

1941 Virginia Woolf drowned herself in the Ouse. *Between the Acts* published posthumously.

1942 Published *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays.*

1943 Published *A Haunted House and Other Stories.*

1947 Published *The Moment and Other Essays.*

1953 Published *A Writer's Diary.*

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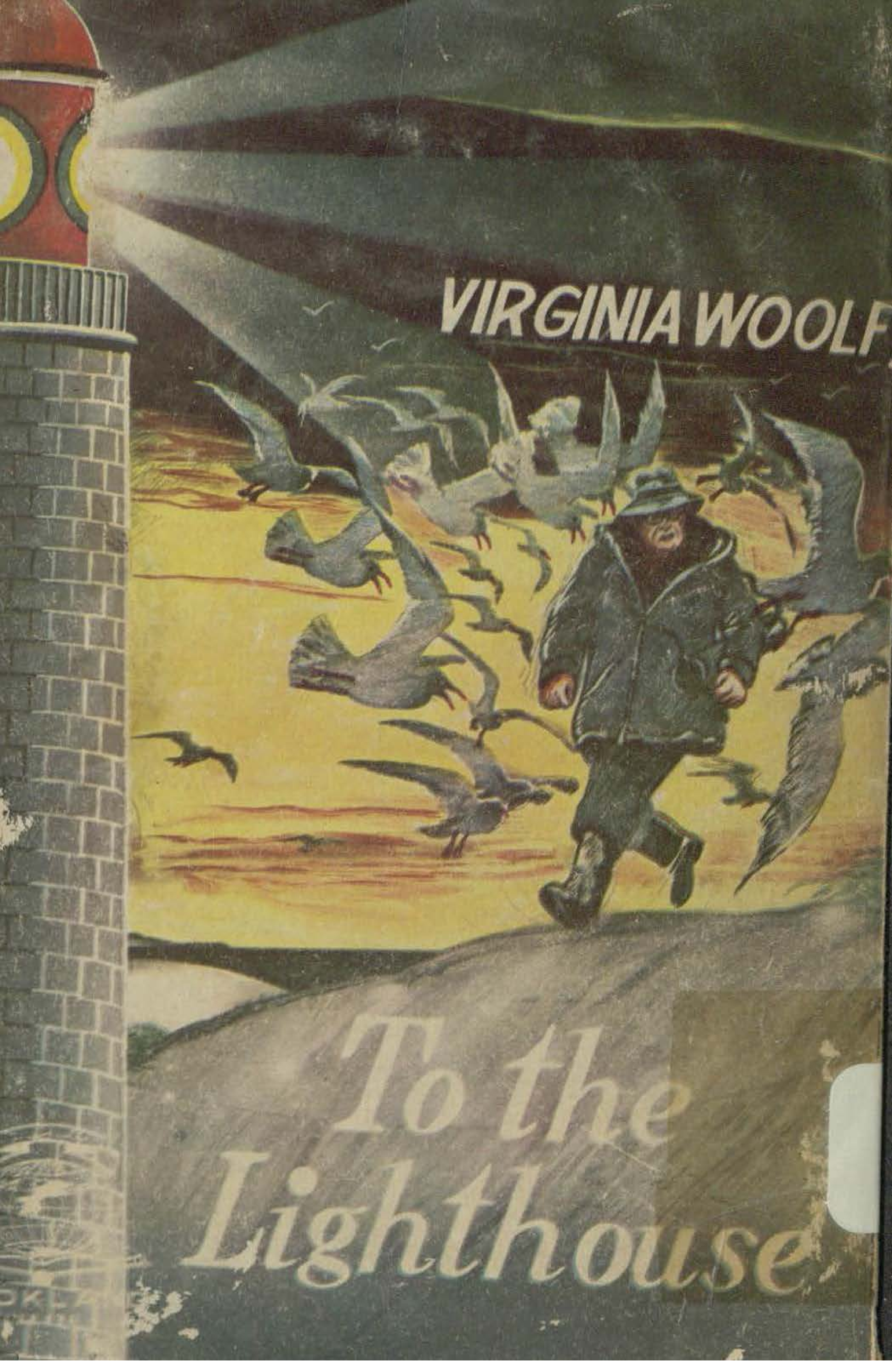
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VIRGINIA WOOLF
To the Lighthouse